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OR,

The Vendetta of Death.

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JUN DICK, DETECTIVE," "JOE PHENIX,
THE POLICE SPY," "THE DECOY
DETECTIVE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE DYING WOMAN.

In a miserable little hovel, up among the rocks of Shantyville, as the wild district inhabited principally by squatters, near the upper end of Central Park in the great metropolis is called, a wretched looking woman lay dying.

It was the dwelling of a rag-picker, as was plainly evident from the articles scattered around the apartment.

On a rude couch in one corner of the room lay a miserable-looking woman, evidently near to death's door.

By her side sat an aged man, who was so round-shouldered as to appear humpbacked.

He was a person who, had he been well-dressed, would have presented quite a credita-

THE SPORTING DETECTIVE

"I DON'T KNOW HOW IT IS, BUT I FEEL, DOC GRIP, AS IF I HAD KNOWN YOU ALL MY LIFE!" THE YOUNG MILLIONAIRE EXCLAIMED IMPULSIVELY.

He appearance for he had a massive, strongly-marked face, and his long, iron-gray hair and beard gave him the look of one of the ancient sages.

Upon a barrel, placed by the side of the head of the bed in lieu of a table, a candle burned, and upon the mantle-piece, which was nothing but a wooden shelf placed over the fire-place wherein sat an old stove, an extremely disreputable clock ticked the time away.

By the side of the candle on the barrel stood a small vial of medicine and a spoon.

The sick woman was a wretched-looking creature.

Her face was terribly scarred and disfigured and she looked like a being whom fate had permitted to live long beyond her time. The man was watching by the bedside with all the patience and fidelity of a faithful dog.

It was now midnight.

The invalid appeared to be asleep, and the watcher, overcome by fatigue, was just beginning to doze, when the sufferer suddenly opened his eyes, fixed his gaze patiently upon the clock, and called out:

"What time is it? What makes it so dark here? Why don't you snuff the candle so I can see?"

The old man rubbed his eyes, and then looked around him.

The room was fully as well illuminated as it had been during any part of the evening, the candle was burning clearly, not needing any attention, and when he made this discovery a grave look appeared on his face, for the impression immediately came to him that either the woman's mind was wandering, or else that she was rapidly nearing her end.

"It is nearly twelve," he answered, and then, not wishing to reveal his apprehensions to the sick woman, he made a pretense of snuffing the candle.

"And she hasn't come?" the woman exclaimed, in a wailing tone.

"Not yet."

"She will be too late, and yet I begged her to hasten."

"It is so late that she will hardly come to-night. Perhaps the morning will bring her."

"The morning!" she exclaimed, with an energy that for a moment startled the old man; "the morning will be too late! Before the light comes in strong and clear through yonder window my soul will take its flight."

"Oh, no, no," responded the old man, soothingly. "The doctor said you were getting better."

"The doctor is a fraud! He said that after you paid him, didn't he?"

"Ye—yes; I believe it was."

"And he wouldn't look at me or prescribe any medicine until he got his fee?"

"You can hardly blame the man," the other replied. "You know what the people are in this neighborhood."

"Yes, miserable wretches!"

"If the man didn't get his pay in advance he would never get it."

"Very true, and it isn't to be wondered at that the majority of the doctors look upon us unfortunate souls as if we were so many dogs who would be better out of the world than in it."

"But this man seems to be a good doctor enough. He said that you had a violent cold but that it wouldn't amount to much if you took proper care of yourself."

"Yes, I understand all about that. He spoke as though I was a young, hearty woman, full of vitality—instead of which I am a miserable old wretch who has had one foot in the grave for a long, long time."

"Just look at the amount of liquor I have drank in the last twenty years! Have I not literally poured the liquid fire down my throat; drinking to drown remembrance?—and now I must pay for it!"

"I tell you, Banty, I havn't two hours of life left. I can feel that I am sinking slowly but surely into my grave."

"No, no, you mustn't yield to such fears; you must keep up a stout heart," the old man observed encouragingly.

"Oh! she must come—she must come before I die so that I may leave to her this legacy of revenge!" the woman exclaimed, wildly: "but, if fate is determined to spite me and the vital spark flies from this poor body before she arrives then you must tell the tale to her."

"I will—have I not sworn it?" the old man asked, impressively.

"And you will keep the oath, too?" and the dying woman cast an earnest glance in the aged face as though she would read his very soul.

"I will! I swear it by the most sacred oath that the lips of man ever formed!" he replied.

"I believe you—I believe you will be true to me."

"It was a strange chance which brought our lives together but I am satisfied that we have got along far better than most people who are tied to each other. "Both of us having met with a heavy misfortune in the bloom of our youth, had our eyes opened to the uncertainties of this life

"The hand is right on the hour, isn't it?" the woman exclaimed, abruptly.

"It is."

"And the light is so placed that it shines through the window as a signal?"

"It does."

"She cannot mistake the house, then. Oh, she must come! I cannot die in peace until she does come and I intrust to her my secret—enlist her aid in this vendetta of death!"

"It is exactly midnight; she will hardly come at so late an hour," remarked the old man, with a grave shake of the head.

"You don't know the girl," the woman replied, quickly. "I have not seen her since she was twelve years old, but then she had the spirit of a demon."

"Young as she was in years, yet she would have her own way, and neither persuasion nor threats had the slightest effect upon her."

"When she hears my story she will enter heart and soul into this matter; she will take up this vendetta as though she was Corsican born and the hot Italian blood coursed through her veins."

"Hush!" exclaimed the old man, suddenly, holding up his finger in warning.

"What is it?" and the woman listened with all her ears.

"I thought I heard a step."

"It is my girl!"

And in her eagerness she half-rose in bed.

She was so weak, though, that she could not retain the position, and with a groan sunk down again.

There was a knock at the door.

The old man hastened to shove back the heavy bolt which guarded the door, then, opening it, a female form wrapped from head to foot in one of the old-fashioned waterproof cloaks, with the hood drawn tightly over her face, appeared.

"Is this the house of Mary Bull?" the stranger asked.

"Yes, yes, come in!" the sick woman ejaculated, before the old man had a chance to speak.

"Thank heaven you have come in time!"

The girl—for she was not more than two-and-twenty—hastened to the bedside, throwing back the hood of the cloak from her head, as she did so, revealing that she possessed a handsome, aristocratic face, although there were strong lines upon it which betrayed to a good judge of human nature, a violent temper; and there were other ugly lines, too, which seemed to say that the pathway of this young creature had not been strewn with flowers.

She knelt by the bedside and the dying woman looked anxiously into her face.

"Why, child, you look as if you had had a great deal of trouble," she remarked.

"My looks do not deceive then!" she exclaimed scornfully, "for it is the truth; I have had a deal of trouble."

"And it has been your own fault, wild, wayward girl that you are and always have been!"

"Tut, tut, mother! don't scold! I didn't cross the ocean to listen to a lecture."

"Nor will I inflict one on you; but, tell me, how comes it that you are looking so poorly and are dressed so meanly, too?"

"The tale is soon told," and then the girl glanced in doubt at the old man.

CHAPTER II.

DECLARING THE VENDETTA.

THE woman understood the meaning of the glance.

"Do not fear to speak; this man has been my companion for the last fifteen years, and when I am gone you will find him to be a true and faithful friend to you."

"It is my husband, Robert Bull; though, if you were to call him by that name in this neighborhood it is doubtful if any one would understand who you meant, for every one around here calls him Banty Bull."

"Because, like Atlas, I am formed to carry a world upon my shoulders," the old man observed.

"You are living in miserable quarters," and the girl looked around her pityingly.

"It suits the business in which we are engaged; we are the king and queen of the rag-pickers and a good bit of money we have got by it, too."

The eyes of the girl brightened, and the hard lines around her mouth deepened.

"Money? Ay, that is what all humans crave, and you were wise to live here if by so doing you could acquire wealth."

"I see that you have felt the pangs of poverty; you have learned the value of money, young as you are."

"Oh, yes, I have led a checkered life for the past ten years."

"Just about ten years ago you ran away from the convent where I placed you to be educated when you reached your twelfth year."

"Yes, wise mother, you sent me there so that the demon which you declared was in me might be tamed, and as a result, I was placed under so strict a restraint that I embraced the first opportunity which offered to escape from it," the girl remarked, sarcastically.

"Then, too, I fell in love, like the idiot that I was, with a handsome fellow whom I chanced

to see while taking my daily walk for exercise with my sister pupils."

"I should not have thought it possible that such a thing could happen with the strict watch which is kept in such institutions."

"There's an old adage, mother, which says that love laughs at locksmiths, and in my case it certainly was so."

"My lover, too, was a dashing fellow, a thorough man of the world, and up to all sorts of tricks, and so it was not a difficult matter for such a man to bid defiance to the strictness of the convent rules."

"It was a case of love at first sight, you know," and the girl gave a laugh full of mockery.

"At least it was so on my part, and I believed my lover to be equally sincere, of course."

"I see; it is the same old tale of woman's faith and man's falsehood."

"Well, I can't say that it was quite as bad as that, although I was shockingly deceived. I eloped with my gentleman, believing him to be an Italian count, a man of both rank and fortune, but before our honeymoon had ended, the French police rudely awoke me from my dream of happiness by arresting my husband for swindling!"

"You had fallen the prey of an adventurer, then?" asked the sick woman who was listening to the tale with great interest.

"Yes, an Italian fast enough, but a common fellow, who, from being the servant of a nobleman had blossomed out into a man of rank himself."

"But I had no right to expect anything better, for what was I myself?"

"Your child, but who, or what, my father was, or how you obtained the means to support me I never knew."

"But you will soon understand all," the woman interrupted.

"I was as great a swindler, though, as my noble husband, although innocently so," the girl continued, without noticing the interruption.

"The adventurer found out that I was an American girl, saw that I was well-dressed, and like all these foreigners had the idea that the American girls at school abroad were all wealthy; so, when he caught me he fancied he was getting a fortune, but was disgusted when he learned the truth, yet, as I was good-looking, and accomplished, he fancied I might be useful to him; and I will give the fellow credit for being really fond of me, after we had lived together a while. To make a long story short, I clung to him even after I discovered what his true character was."

"For five years we wandered up and down in Europe, one moment living like princes in a grand hotel when fortune smiled upon us, the next walking the streets, lacking a crust of bread to stay our hunger, and uncertain as to what roof would shelter us for the night."

"Both of us had the genius to be able to turn our hand to almost anything, and so we never really starved, although sometimes we came so close to it that it wasn't any joke."

"I have taught music, lived by my needle, painted a little, tried my hand as an actress, sung in the chorus at the opera, and once was so hard-pushed that I sung ballads in the open streets at night like a beggar."

"Even acted as a spy for the police, but I was almost starved when I did it, for I hate the law and all connected with it."

"Ten days ago, driven from the Continent, my husband and I arrived in London, and on the very night of our arrival, I happened to pick up a copy of the *London Times* and saw your advertisement, begging me to communicate with you."

"My husband had gone out with the idea of looking around a bit, hoping to find some opening for us. We had a small sum of money, the gains of the adventure which had forced us to seek safety in flight. My husband did not return that night. I was not worried, for I supposed he had become interested in some affair."

"In the morning newspapers, though, I read an account of a brawl in a low quarter, much frequented by foreigners, which had resulted in the death of a stranger, whom no one in the neighborhood knew."

"The description answered that of my husband. The end had come, as I had expected it would for years. It was not the first time he had engaged in a personal encounter, and when in a quarrel he was quick to use his knife."

"I was not sorry, either, for I had become disgusted with the miserable life I was leading. I visited the Dead House where the body of the stranger had been placed, and, as I had expected, it was the man who had made a wreck of my young life."

"I did not utter a word to lead any one to suspect that I knew aught of the matter, for I was anxious to get away."

"The past was dead, and I made up my mind never to do aught to recall it."

"I called at the office in London, as you directed me to do in your advertisement, got your letter and sent you the cable message that I was about to start for New York—and here I am."

"The hand of heaven has been in the matter," and the sick woman spoke solemnly. "You

have passed through all these trials that you might be qualified to carry out the mission of vengeance which I wish you to undertake.

"If you were only a common, simple girl the task would be too great for you, but now you are a woman who has fought the world, and have learned not only how to take care of yourself, but to deal effective blows at your enemies. If I had been able to direct your career, just such a life as you have led I would have selected for you, for no better preparation could you have had."

"Well, mother, I know that I am old beyond my years, for into a few months the experience of a lifetime has been compressed."

"It is the hand of heaven, as I said; justice will be done after all."

"But, I must hasten to tell my story ere it is too late, for I feel that my sands of life are running fast away."

"So listen, and weigh well every word, for I am about to tell you the story of my life."

"I was left an orphan at an early age, but being a bright, capable and industrious girl I had no difficulty in supporting myself."

"Heaven gave me the gift of beauty and that beauty was the ruin of my life, for it attracted the attention of a man who professed to love me."

"He was a handsome gentleman, engaged in business with his father, and many degrees above me in the social scale."

"He loved me, though, so he declared, and I was fool enough to believe him; an honorable love, too, he protested. I believed him of course; but, on his father's account, he did not dare to openly make me his wife, for all his future depended upon his father, who wished him to marry a rich, young girl, the daughter of a neighbor."

"And so, beguiled by his specious words, he induced me to consent to a secret marriage."

"I trusted the man fully, and the thought that he would do me wrong, never entered my foolish head."

"In order to keep the matter a profound secret, my lover suggested that we should go to some neighboring city and there be married."

"There was a minister in Brooklyn with whom he said he was slightly acquainted, who would be willing to marry us."

"He was an old man, living in an obscure quarter of the city, and the fact of the marriage would not be apt to become public."

"That night week he came for me in a buggy, and we crossed the ferry and drove to the minister's house."

"I, full of confidence, never dreamed of anything wrong, and so I took no heed of the road."

"We crossed a ferry, and that was all I knew, but now I am satisfied that we never went to Brooklyn at all, but, where we did go, I havn't the slightest idea. We were married by a German minister who could hardly speak a word of English, and his servants, two dull and stupid German women, acted as witnesses."

And at this point her voice faltered.

CHAPTER III.

THE OATH OF VENGEANCE.

She was evidently overtasking her strength, and the old man hastened to administer some of the medicine.

"Not that stuff!" exclaimed the woman, impatiently. "Give me brandy—something to keep the life and the heart in me!"

From the little corner cupboard old Banty produced a bottle of brandy, poured some into a glass and gave it to the woman.

It revived her almost immediately.

"It was all a trick; the marriage did not take place in Brooklyn at all, or, if it did, I never was able to discover the locality," she resumed. "After the ceremony we returned to New York. Rooms had been taken in a tenement-house on Avenue A, and furnished so that we could go to housekeeping immediately. A poor quarter had been selected right where the working people lived, so that we might avoid detection."

"For six months I lived in a heaven of happiness, your father—for this man was your father, girl—spending all the time he could possibly spare with me."

"But the end came at last. Business called him away; he went south to be gone a month."

"Before he had been absent a week the smallpox broke out in my neighborhood and I was one of the first to take it."

"Alone and friendless, for, acting under my husband's orders, I never had anything to do with the neighbors, I was seized under that terribly harsh law which is in force in New York and carried away to the hospital."

"There I remained two months before I was cured and when I was discharged my beauty was all gone and I was the hideous creature that I have ever since remained."

"I went to my home and there I found a letter telling me that upon applying to a certain firm of lawyers five hundred dollars would be paid me."

"I went there; they said they had been instructed to pay me the money, and that was all they knew about the matter."

"Desperate, I endeavored to find my husband, going to his father's house for that pur-

pose, and there I learned that the father was dead, the son had succeeded to his fortune, and was now in Europe and was not expected to return to America.

"Then I realized that I was deserted. I sailed on the first steamer for England."

"I found my husband, but he had married again, and coolly denied that he had ever known me."

"My marriage-certificate had disappeared. I consulted lawyers, but one and all said there wasn't any chance for me unless I could prove my marriage."

"In New York we had lived under an assumed name, and then I saw how completely I had been tricked."

"I returned to the city, and after your birth I endeavored to find the minister who had performed the marriage ceremony, but the search was a fruitless one."

"And then, satisfied that there was no chance for me to prove my marriage I gave up the attempt, and resolved to devote myself to vengeance."

"Earnestly I toiled, striving to amass money so that I might be able some day to make a good fight against the man who had so wronged me."

"I fell into this life, and as you grew up you were sent abroad so that you might not know the way in which I lived."

"At last I have gained money enough to warrant me in seeking to be revenged, but even at the very moment when I was about to begin, this withering sickness fell upon me, and from the first I realized it was not fated I should live—I felt that my illness would end only in my death."

"It was a bitter thought to think that just at the moment when I was about to revenge the wrong which had been done me, death should step in and strike me down with his unrelenting hand."

"Then thoughts of you came into my mind and I determined to find you if possible, bring you home and intrust the task of vengeance to you."

"I succeeded in my design and now, girl, I ask you are you willing to take up the vendetta which I have declared against the race who bear the name of Dwindlehurst?"

"Yes, most assuredly I will!" the girl exclaimed. "The world has not treated me well, and, like all who have felt the iron heel of oppression and disaster, I bear a deadly hatred to the men and women who riot in fortune and smile upon the poor in scorn."

"But the name of Dwindlehurst is familiar to me. I think a young man of that name came from England in the same steamer in which I sailed. A very rich young man, I believe."

"Yes, Rudolph Dwindlehurst?"

"That was his name."

"He is the son of the man who so cruelly wronged me—his only child and the heir to the vast fortune which the father accumulated."

"Herman Dwindlehurst, the father was named, but he is dead and in his grave, and it is against the son that the vengeance must be directed."

"This Rudolph Dwindlehurst is my half-brother then?"

"Yes; you are both the children of Herman Dwindlehurst; you are the elder and fully as much entitled to the vast wealth left by the old man as this boy who now enjoys it, for I was legally and really Herman Dwindlehurst's wife, although he was base enough to arrange the marriage so that I can not prove it."

"But, before we declare war would it not be wise to see this young man?" the girl asked.

"When he hears the story he may be willing to come to some arrangement."

"Oh, no," and the sufferer shook her head impatiently. "After the death of his father I called upon him and told my story. He listened patiently but said he would have to consult his lawyers. They of course laughed at the idea of my having any claim, but he said that, rather than have any trouble which might result in smirching the good name of his father, he would be willing to give me a few thousand dollars—give them to me as though I was a common beggar!" exclaimed the woman fiercely.

"Yes, I understand; it was merely to avoid scandal," the girl added. "A few thousand dollars was nothing to a man worth millions."

"That was the idea, exactly; and now, you must do your best to ruin this young man. He is the last of the Dwindlehursts and you must make his life a burden to him. You must use all possible means to make his existence miserable!"

"There will be plenty of money to aid you. Banty Bully here"—and she nodded to the old man—"has charge of the wealth I have secured by years of hard toil; he will give you what you want, and also aid you to the utmost of his power. He has sworn to assist in the vendetta and you can depend upon him."

"Be it so; I accept the trust and will do my best to work harm to this last scion of the race of Dwindlehurst."

"When I had the interview with him I said that nothing less than the half of his fortune would content me, and he looked at me as though he believed I was a lunatic. He has been a

spoiled child, the idol of his father, and is ill-fitted to stand rude shocks. Hitherto his wealth has smoothed life's pathway for him; be it your task to mingle the bitter with the sweet. Strike at his fortune. Devise tricks and traps to rob him of his wealth. If he loves, strike at the maiden and take from him that pleasure!"

"Do not rest until you have ruined him, and then make yourself known, and tell him that it was the dead hand of Mary Culpepper, reaching even from the grave, which struck the blow."

"Swear to avenge the wrongs which have been inflicted upon me—swear never to rest until you have humbled this lost scion of the race of Dwindlehurst to the dust!"

And in her excitement the dying woman half rose in bed.

"I swear!" exclaimed the girl, sinking upon her knees by the bedside.

"If you had not sworn I would not have rested in peace in my grave!" the vengeful woman cried, sinking back entirely exhausted.

The old man hastened to administer another dose of the brandy, but as he put the glass to her lips, her head sunk back—the death-rattle sounded in her throat, and then, with a gasp, her perturbed soul took flight.

But she had succeeded in her wish.

Her daughter had come and the vendetta had been declared!

CHAPTER IV.

THE GENTLEMAN RIDER.

"Oh, come; don't be afraid of the liquor; another glass will surely do you no harm!"

"See how it sparkles in the light! Look at the bubbles as they rise! Isn't the bouquet just delicious?"

"Why on earth are you afraid of the wine? There isn't a headache in a dozen bottles!"

In the showy *cafe* of one of the prominent uptown hotels this speech was spoken.

One of the fashionable resorts, where the gilded youths of the metropolis do congregate.

The speaker was a young fellow, scarcely more than a boy, with the first down of manhood upon his lip—a handsome fellow, although his complexion was quite dark—a regular olive, in fact, and the cast of his features seemed to denote that he was of foreign extraction, if not a foreigner by birth.

He was quite effeminate-looking, and yet an observant person would decide that he had brawn and sinews to more than hold their own against any ordinary man.

Both eyes and hair were black, the first piercing and sharp, the second curling in little crispy curls all over his head.

These two features gave a sort of snake-like look to the head; that is, a judge of character would have been impressed by these two things, for in some strange way they reminded one of a serpent.

The young man was dressed in the light of fashion, his clothes being elegant—his jewelry superb.

He was almost a stranger in New York, but to the set who frequented this particular *cafe* he was well-known.

Rodament Clingman he called himself, and in his fluent way he gave his hearers to understand that he was from Louisiana, where his family enjoyed vast possessions.

The French Creoles are well known in New York, and on this account Clingman was favorably received.

His companion at the table, to whom were addressed the words with which our story begins, was a decided contrast to Clingman, being a young man with a round, rosy face, light brown hair and blue eyes.

He was what is commonly termed a "horsey" young man; that is, there was something about him that suggested the stable.

It is quite the "thing" among a certain class of young men in the metropolis to affect an intimate knowledge of that noble animal, the horse, and all that appertains to him.

But the most of these young bloods who talk so freely upon the subject know very little more about a horse than they do of an elephant.

But, as it is the fashion among a portion of our rich men to take delight in the pursuits of the turf, in imitation of the ruling "upper ten" of England, so the young fellows who wish to make out that they amount to something, follow the lead set them by the wealthy sportsmen as far as they are able.

But the young man with the round, rosy, English-like face was not of this class.

He was of the horse horsey.

Joseph Traddles he was called; Joe Traddles the world generally termed him.

He was a young Englishman who had found his way to this country, bringing letters of introduction to some of the leading New Yorkers of a sporting turn of mind.

Traddles was not a particularly aristocratic appellation, but it was hinted mysteriously that it was not his real name.

That, in reality, he was the younger son of a noble family, but having indulged in some wild pranks in England, had been forced to cross the water, and had assumed a plebeian name so as to throw his creditors off the track.

Be this as it may, the young fellow was un-

doubtedly a gentleman, had received an excellent education, and when it came to turf matters was a regular oracle.

A fair billiard-player, too; quite expert at cards, and rumor whispered that to his gains in this direction he was indebted for his living.

But for all this talk, no one ever ventured to hint that Traddles was what might be called a gambler, or that his gain came from any unfair play.

He was simply an expert; that was all.

But it was in connection with turf matters that his genius most brightly shone.

As a gentleman rider it was acknowledged that he stood a head-and-shoulders above any man in the country; and many of his admirers did not scruple to say that there wasn't any jockey in the land who could give him points in this profession.

It was a little singular, too, that a man over whose past life such a cloud of mystery hung, should bear the excellent reputation for honesty that Traddles enjoyed.

"He is square—square as a die, and don't you forget it. When he is in the 'pig-skin' a million of dollars wouldn't be any temptation to him to pull his horse and throw a race!"

This had been said a hundred times in regard to the "gentleman rider" by some of the oldest and shrewdest men on the turf.

And now having introduced the pair, we will allow them to proceed with their conversation.

The two met by chance just outside the *cafe*, and the Creole had invited the gentleman into the saloon to have a glass of wine, saying, frankly:

"Old fellow, you can give me some points on turf matters, so I can pick up a stake or two."

Traddles had smilingly consented, for it seemed funny to him to be regarded as an oracle in turf matters, for as well as any man living he knew how uncertain such things are.

The "sure thing" generally turns out to be a very unsure thing, and the men who hazard their cash on the "favorite," often come to the conclusion that there is a great deal of truth in the old saying that a fool and his money are soon parted.

The Jersey Races at Monmouth Park, near Long Branch were to commence on the morrow and it was in regard to this meeting that the Creole wanted information.

A bottle of wine was dispatched while they conversed and then before Traddles had a chance to object, Clingman ordered a second, but when it promptly made its appearance, the gentleman rider said that he wished the other would excuse him as he thought he had already taken enough.

And then followed the speech with which our chapter begins.

"Oh, yes, it's precious good tipple," Traddles admitted.

"And I am fond enough of it, too, as a general rule, but I have been indulging pretty freely to-day, and I think it is about time for me to stop."

"I'm off for Long Branch this afternoon, you know, and when I get down there some of the boys will be sure to want to 'set 'em up' for me and if I get a cargo on board before I start, where will I be?"

"Yes, yes, that is true enough, but a few glasses more of this good wine will not affect a fellow like yourself with a head of iron."

"The bottle is open and it is a shame not to drink it."

Thus persuaded, Traddles allowed his glass to be refilled.

"By the way, you are going to ride to-morrow, I believe?"

"Yes, a match race," replied the gentleman rider.

"Dwindlehurst's 'Son of Hercules' against Mike O'Gall's 'Kildare Colleen.'"

"I don't know much about either animal, but I suppose as you have the mount on Dwindlehurst's nag it will be safe to put my money on the Son of Hercules!"

As Traddles had said he had been indulging quite freely on liquid stimulants and, for a wonder, was inclined to be talkative; generally he was a close-mouthed sort of fellow.

But the Creole had an insinuating way with him, and stood quite high, too, in the good graces of the young sportsman.

Then, he was no old hand who thought he "knew it all," nor an indiscreet young blood who could not be trusted to keep secret any information intrusted to him.

And so Traddles departed from his usual rule and began to talk freely.

"Well, there isn't anything very sure about a horse-race, except that some animal is bound to come in ahead," he responded.

"O'Gall thinks he has got a sure thing, or he wouldn't risk his money. He's as cunning an Irishman as ever jumped a bog and what he don't know about the turf ain't worth knowing. He's a sharper from the word go, and he just manages to hold on to decent society by the skin of his teeth, as it were."

"He's up to all sorts of nasty tricks, but is cunning enough to evade being found out."

"If he had his money up and the only chance for him to make a stake was by having his own horse 'pulled' or by 'nobbling' the crack he

was most afraid of he would do it in a minute."

"By nobbling you mean poisoning a horse, or something of that kind?"

"Exactly, and this race is a put-up job to swindle Dwindlehurst out of a small fortune. Dwindlehurst is the King of the Dudes, you know."

CHAPTER V.

O'GALL'S GAME.

"I THINK I have met Dwindlehurst, but I don't know much about him," the Creole remarked.

"Why do they call him the King of the Dudes?"

"Oh, that is only a name that some smart Aleck of a reporter gave him."

"Dwindlehurst's father, old Herman, made a big pile of money in the sugar business, and when he died he left it all to his son."

"The old man kept the boy under a pretty tight rein while he lived, and, as is generally the case, since Dwindlehurst came into his money he has been making it fly in a lively way."

"He went in to set the bloods an example and has managed to cut quite a dash. He takes particular pride in his dress, and so somebody started the yarn that he had fifty-two suits of clothes, one for every week in the year."

"The story got into the newspapers, and, as I said, some reporter called him the King of the Dudes, and the name sticks, although there are a dozen young fellows in the city whom it would fit far better than it does him."

"Really, Dwindlehurst is a nice fellow; he's young, and his head has been a little turned by the great wealth which unexpectedly descended to him, for no one had any idea that the father was worth much money, but there is a great deal of the man about the boy, and I hate to see him setting the pace quite so strong."

"I suppose he wouldn't thank anybody for advice?"

"Well, he takes it kindly enough, but he says he has so much money that he don't know what to do with it; but he'll find that will not be true long, if he keeps on as he is going."

"Did I understand you to say that this race was a sort of a swindle upon Dwindlehurst?"

"Yes, a regular put-up job on the part of O'Gall and a gang who run with him."

"This Son of Hercules is as finely bred a horse as there is in the country—traces back to Lexington and Messenger—but a more ugly-tempered brute never looked through a bridle."

"He is developing into a regular man-eater, you know."

"Dwindlehurst bought him at a long price, and thought he had a bargain; and so he would have, if the brute's nasty temper didn't make him so uncertain that there isn't any dependence to be placed upon him."

"And that is the reason that O'Gall and his party bantered Dwindlehurst into a race."

"The horses are pretty evenly matched, but if the Son of Hercules becomes at all fractious—and the chances are about a hundred to one that they will worry him so at the 'post' that he will—the filly will beat him, sure!"

"How was it that you accepted the mount for Dwindlehurst? You don't generally ride losing horses."

"Well, thereby lies a tale," responded the gentleman rider, helping himself to another glass of champagne.

"I hate O'Gall and all his crowd. In my opinion they are not much better than a lot of thieves, and ought to be ruled off of every race-track in the country."

"They sprung this match on Dwindlehurst, stipulating for gentleman riders, because they knew that there is hardly one man out of a hundred riders, professional or amateur, who can do anything with such a brute as the Son of Hercules in a race."

"As it happens, though, I know the horse, and have ridden him ten or a dozen times; and so, when I heard how the gang were going to bleed the King of the Dudes, I made up my mind to put a spoke in their wheel."

"I see, I see," and the Creole laughed as though he thought it was a good joke, and at the same time refilled the other's glass.

"And I worked the trick so that Dwindlehurst came to me to ride the horse. I accepted the mount and, bar accidents, I think I stand a good chance to beat the filly."

"Then you would advise me to back the Son of Hercules?"

"Yes, if you are determined to bet; but it isn't any sure thing, mind; no horse-race is ever sure."

"But isn't O'Gall and his party backing his filly heavily?"

"Yes, so I understand. Of course it looks to them as if they had a pretty good thing. If they knew that the Son of Hercules and myself were old pals they might change their minds."

"Of course what I have told you is in strict confidence. You won't give it away?" and the gentleman rider, who was now beginning to show the effects of liquor, gazed earnestly in the face of the other.

"Oh, no; you can rely upon my discretion."

"I don't know what in the deuce made me

open my mouth about the thing anyway," Traddles said, with a shake of the head.

"I generally manage to keep my business to myself, but I declare to-day I've let the cat out of the bag in this matter."

"I guess I have come a little mesmerism over you," replied the other, laughing. "I'm a medium, you know."

"Oh yes, of course!" and then Traddles laughed.

"Well, the mischief is done now; but I will rely upon you to keep quiet."

"Oh, certainly."

"Now you see why I don't want to drink any more than I can help. I mustn't go to bed tonight with a cargo of blue ruin aboard, for I need a clear head and all my wits about me tomorrow."

"Oh, yes; no doubt about that."

"The Son of Hercules is a mighty queer animal. If anything goes wrong and he once gets his temper up, there's no doing anything with him."

"One lick with the whip, or a touch with the spur, and it is good-by race!"

"I don't doubt O'Gall and his party would be willing to stand a handsome sum to get you to irritate the brute, so they could pull off the race."

"Yes, yes, not a doubt about that. Only yesterday one of the gang offered to bet me five to one thousand that the Dwindlehurst horse would win, or he said he would give the same odds to any friend of mine."

"That was an attempt to buy me, you know, for the odds are only slightly in the horse's favor, ten to nine."

"But you wouldn't be bought?"

"Not if I know myself!" the gentleman rider replied, defiantly.

"I want money badly enough sometimes, heaven knows; but I'll never pull a race to get it!"

"Good boy! that is where your head is level!" and then the Creole poured the last of the wine into the glass.

"Here's bad luck to O'Gall and his gang!" The toast was drank with due enthusiasm.

"And now I must be off!"

"To Long Branch?"

"Yes."

"Hang me! if I won't go with you!" Clingman exclaimed, abruptly.

"You will?"

"Yes; I'm going down, anyway, for after what you have told me I think I can see a chance to win a pot of money by backing your mount."

"You see I follow the English idea, and think as much of the jockey who is to pilot the horse as of the animal itself."

"If the Son of Hercules comes to the post all right—and there is precious little doubt of that, for he is in the hands of men whom no amount of money can buy—and he don't get into a passion, the race is a dead open-and-shut thing for him."

"So I should think, and at the Branch tonight I can get on all the money I want."

"Oh, yes; no trouble about that. Owing to the temper of Dwindlehurst's horse, the bookmakers think the filly stands a good chance to pull the race off. The public have made the Son of Hercules a favorite, but the sporting men are taking all the bets that are offered."

"Well, let's call a cab and be off."

Then the Creole consulted his watch, a hand some little gold bauble, more suited for a lady than a man.

"Just a quarter past three," Clingman remarked.

"There is a train at four, I believe, and we shall have ample time to catch it."

"All right."

The cab was summoned and in due time the two were landed at the ferry-house depot of the Long Branch road.

The Creole hastened on ahead and purchased the tickets, despite the remonstrances of the other.

"Oh, no," he replied, "I am paymaster-general this time!"

Then Clingman happened to glance at the clock.

"Hallo! we've got some fifteen minutes yet. Have you a pocket-pistol for we will be sure to need a drink on the way down."

"No, I haven't."

"Wait for me then while I run across the street and get one."

"Go ahead!"

The Creole hurried across the street to one of the saloons opposite the ferry-house, disappeared for about five minutes and then returned.

"All right!" he exclaimed.

"Now I am armed and equipped as the law directs."

The two crossed the ferry and boarded the train, taking seats in the smoker.

The conversation between the two on the train has no particular bearing upon our tale, so we will not weary the patience of the reader with it.

The train was on time and when it halted at the Long Branch station the pair quitted it.

The gentleman rider had arranged to stop with a friend who owned a farm a short dis-

tance from the race-track and when he explained this to the Creole he tendered him an invitation to accompany him, which was cordially accepted.

There was a rush of horsemen toward the pair. Clingman nodded to the first man, a red-bearded fellow, and the two gentlemen entered his carriage.

Away they went. For the first time the Creole produced a flask and they took a drink.

Ten minutes after Traddles fell fast asleep, and the vehicle, turning aside from the Eatontown road, plunged into the dense pine forest to the southward.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RACE DAY.

It was the first day of the Fall Meeting at Monmouth Park, as the celebrated race-track near Long Branch, in the State of New Jersey, is called.

A great crowd was in attendance, for there was promise of an excellent day's sport.

Four good races were on the card, in addition to the match for ten thousand dollars a side between Dwindlehurst's Son of Hercules and O'Gall's celebrated crack mare, the Kildare Colleen.

O'Gall—an undersized, wiry, red-faced, loud-talking son of the Emerald Isle, pretty well along in years, but holding his own like a major though, except that his tawny red hair and beard were beginning to be thickly streaked with gray—was an old sport, and his face was well known on every race-track in the country.

Dwindlehurst was a new man on the turf.

The Son of Hercules was the only horse he owned, and it was the general opinion that the King of the Dudes had been most decidedly taken in when he invested his money on about the worst-tempered brute that had ever kicked up his heels on a race-track.

In the opinion of a majority of the sporting men, it was a case of a fool and his money soon parted, and when the news of the match became public property, it was the general belief that O'Gall had "caught on to a soft snap," to use the language dear to the heart of the turf prophet.

The terms "gentleman riders up," too, seemed to these wise men to be a catch.

It was well-known that attached to O'Gall's fortunes was a rather peculiar "gentleman," James Conners by name, who had the reputation of being as good a rider as ever threw a leg over a saddle.

He was an Irishman of good family, but rather under a cloud now, in consequence of having got into a difficulty with the authorities at home in regard to certain rifles which were found concealed on his premises.

A speedy flight to America was the only thing that saved the young Irishman from doing service for the Queen in a penal colony.

He was a relative of O'Gall, and always rode any of his horses when engaged in a match where regular jockeys were barred out.

It was the supposition that young Dwindlehurst would ride his own horse, and so at first the betting was almost two to one on the Kildare Colleen; but when the public at large learned that Joe Traddles, who was a popular favorite, had accepted the mount of the Son of Hercules, the betting became more even.

O'Gall was on the "quarter-stretch," while Dwindlehurst was down at the stables, looking after his horse, both attended by a group of friends.

One of the betting men came hastily up to O'Gall and drew him one side.

This was one of the chief book-makers, and a man of note on the turf.

A Jewish-looking fellow, flashily dressed, and with a good deal of the flourish of an auctioneer about him, Moses Edwards—Mo. Edwards, as he was generally called for short.

Placing his hand upon O'Gall's arm, the turf man brought his mouth close to the ear of the other.

"Say, old fellow, honor bright, and no shenanigan you know, is there anything the matter with your mare?"

O'Gall looked at Edwards in astonishment, for he knew the other well enough to comprehend that he was very much in earnest.

"Anything the matter with my mare!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, old fellow, give it to me straight, you know. I will do as much for you some time."

"There isn't anything the matter with the mare. I have just come from the stable, and she is fit to run for a man's life!"

"And, O'Gall, dear boy, she carries your money, doesn't she? This isn't any skin game—she is to run to win, eh?"

The sport knew the man he was addressing, for had he dared to speak to any high-toned racing man in this fashion, he would have been knocked down immediately for his impudence.

But O'Gall only laughed as if he thought it was a good joke.

He had done such tricks, and Mo. Edwards knew it, but the public at large did not, although at times there had been a deal of suspicion.

Oh, no, it is all as straight as a string this

time, and she carries ten thousand of my money, too, besides the stake.

"It is a pretty sure thing for the mare, as the colt has the temper of a devil, and for the last year it has been pretty safe to bet the odds that the ugly beast wouldn't start until the others were well off, and then he generally tries to jump the fence, or to kick his rider's head off, if he dares to put the spurs into him."

"Joe Traddles is to have the mount, you know?"

"Yes, Joe's a good man, but the best jockey in the world can't do anything with this beast if he is inclined to kick up a bobbery."

"Did you know that Joe has ridden the horse a half a dozen times before and never had any trouble with him?"

"The deuce you say!" cried O'Gall, his under jaw dropping a little.

"It's a fact, they say—last winter down South; I had it on good authority."

"I don't believe it! you hear all sorts of things nowadays!"

"The mare has got the foot of him, anyway!" he continued doggedly.

"Well, I hope so, for I will drop a pile of money if she hasn't," Edwards remarked in a confidential sort of way.

"I thought she had a pretty sure thing of it, and I have bet that way, but just now a big lump of money came into the market to support the colt, and the parties are taking all the bets they can get; and the result is, the odds now are six to four on the horse, and if you are game for it, O'Gall, you can get on fifty-thousand dollars."

The other stared and seemed nervous.

"By the Old Harry! if the mare is beaten, I shall lose more money than I can well spare. I can't put up any more, and that's flat!"

Mo. Edwards now became extremely anxious.

"I'm in for thirty thousand if the colt wins, and it will about break me."

"These offers to back The Son has demoralized the market; nobody wants to back the mare, but all who have put their money on her are trying to hedge. I thought, maybe, that something had gone wrong with her, and that these sharps had found it out, and that was why they were sailing in so freely."

"She is fit to run for a man's life!" O'Gall repeated stoutly.

"I tell you what it is; it is that donkey of a Dwindlehurst! He has plenty of money you know, and has done this for a blow."

"No, if you have the sand to go in and take the odds you can make a fortune on this race."

"Yes, yes, I've got all the sand in the world, but I can't afford to lose any more money than I have up."

"If I was sure that it wasn't anything but a bluff, hang me! if I wouldn't go ten thousand more though, just for the sake of skinning this fool, Dwindlehurst, but I don't dare to risk it, for he may have some good men at his elbow who know what they are about."

Just at this moment the young Creole, Clingman, came strolling along.

He nodded familiarly to the gentlemen, to both of whom he had been introduced that morning in the Long Branch Hotel, where the pools were sold.

"Speculating about your mare's chances, Mr. O'Gall," he said in his easy way.

"I hear that they are betting six to four on the colt and I am going up to put ten thousand dollars on the Kildare Colleen. How is that for high?" And as he spoke the young man drew ten thousand dollar bills from his pocket and waved them carelessly in the air.

Mo. Edwards's eyes opened, although he was a man used to handling large sums of money.

"Ten thousand dollars is no trifle to lose," he observed.

"Oh, but I sha'n't lose it! I've got the straight tip. Your mare is sure to win, O'Gall. Don't give it away, but Joe Traddles will not ride the horse."

"The deuce you say!" exclaimed O'Gall, and Mo. Edwards re-echoed the words.

"Oh, yes, there isn't any doubt about it. They are all in a mess down at the stables now in regard to who they will put up."

"I had it on good authority last night that Joe wouldn't be in the saddle to-day, for he was on the biggest kind of a spree, and even if he did put in an appearance he wouldn't be in any condition to ride."

"Ta, ta, there's the saddling bell now and I am off to invest."

"Why, it will be like picking up money!" Clingman cried as he hastened away.

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW JOCKEY.

THE Creole had told the truth. Joe Traddles had not made his appearance and Dwindlehurst and his friends were in a fever of excitement.

The young man had not worried before at the non-appearance of his jockey, for he had received a letter from him saying he had a little business to attend to at Ocean Beach and would not be at the Park until about two.

Traddles was known to be a man of his word, and Dwindlehurst felt sure he could be depended

upon, particularly as his jockey suit had arrived.

Everything was new, even to the boots, for it was the first time that the Dwindlehurst color—black and yellow—had appeared in public, and the young millionaire was determined that everything should be in good "form."

It was not until about ten minutes before the time for saddling came that Dwindlehurst began to get anxious.

The title, the King of the Dudes, which had been applied to the young man by some penny-a-liner anxious to get up a taking article, was not an apt one, for Dwindlehurst was very far from being a dude, although he was particular in regard to his dress, but not more so than the other young men of his set.

In person he was a well-built young fellow, with a round, boyish face, lit up by a pair of honest-looking blue eyes, and fringed by closely cut blonde hair.

He wore a mustache and side whiskers in the English style.

There were three of his friends with him and after the horse was saddled, all of them greatly admired the beast.

The Son of Hercules was indeed a handsome animal.

This was his first appearance on the turf this season, and his looks excited a great deal of comment.

"Don't appear like the same animal, old chappie," one of the young men remarked, Clarence Van Huyler by name, a scion of one of the old New York families.

"He has wonderfully improved since last Fall. Why, upon my word, he looks a third bigger than he did then, and yet there doesn't seem to be an ounce of fat on him either."

"Oh, no," Dwindlehurst answered, "he is in perfect condition, and if it wasn't for the deuced nasty temper that the brute exhibits once in a while he would be a perfect race-horse."

That the horse had a temper of his own was evident enough from the peculiar way he had of twitching his tail and exhibiting the whites of his eyes.

"By Jove, you know, old fellow, you must have him pull off this race, for I've put a deal of my money on him!" Van Huyler exclaimed, and the other two echoed the remark.

"Well, my trainer says it will be a sure thing, if the horse don't get excited and fly into a passion, and if he does, he's a regular 'rogue' and is as likely to sulk and refuse to run as not."

"He's such a deuced peculiar brute, you know, and that is why I am so anxious for Joe Traddle to ride him."

"Joe knows the horse and the horse knows him and if anybody can get any speed out of him he is the man, but what on earth has become of Joe is a mystery."

At this point the young man consulted his watch.

"Ten minutes of saddling time!" he exclaimed. "By Jove! I can't wait any longer! I suppose I will have to jump into those clothes myself and I'm no jockey. I can sit a horse tolerably well in a cross-country run, but when it comes to a race on the flat where skill and all that sort of thing is required I'm no good."

"It's a deuced shame!" Van Huyler exclaimed, and the others coincided in the remark.

"Upon my word it is! for I have backed the brute so liberally that if he loses I shall be put in the hole for nearly a hundred thousand dollars."

The others expressed their surprise at the largeness of the sum.

"Well, you see, I am a greenhorn at this sort of thing, while O'Gall and his crowd are old hands."

"After the match was made and the betting commenced they fixed the market so that I couldn't get on any money without giving odds of about two to one. I thought it deuced strange, you know, that my horse should be such a prime favorite, but I didn't understand that all the betting sharps were in with O'Gall to force me to give big odds."

"I wasn't going to be bluffed in that way, don't you see, and I laid out my money with a perfect looseness, and finding the horse to be well supported the public at large took a hand in the game, and gradually the thimble-rigging played out, and the betting became more even; but, I tell you what it is, gentlemen, if I have to take the mount I would be willing to go two to one on the other beast."

"By Jove, Dwindlehurst, old chappie, here's the very man for you!" Van Huyler exclaimed, abruptly, as he caught sight of a gentleman approaching.

"Here comes Doc Grip who used to ride all the races that we got up in the regiment when we were in Arkansas. A fellow who is a natural born rider. I've seen him take one of those little Indian ponies—a sort of a mustang, you know, and beat a blooded Morgan horse with it, simply by good riding."

As will be gathered from this remark, Van Huyler had seen service during the war, and therefore was much older than the rest, being a man of thirty-five, or thereabouts.

The gentleman who was approaching and to

whom he referred was a well-built man of about the same age as the speaker.

A muscular fellow, with the brawn and sinews of a prize-fighter, and yet as supple as a cat.

A deceptive looking man, too, in regard to size, for he was so well proportioned that he did not appear to be nearly as large as he really was.

He had a rather long face, regular features, keen gray eyes that when he became excited seemed at a little distance to be more black than gray.

His hair was dark brown in color, was long and worn clubbed after the prevailing fashion in the Southwest, and his face was smoothly shaven.

"He's one of the jolliest fellows you ever met, Dwindlehurst!" Van Huyler exclaimed.

"We were all nothing but kids then, you know, about eighteen, but young as he was Doc Grip, as everybody called him, could thrash any man in the regiment, and some of the boys were pretty hard cases too.

"And then as a runner!—why he beat the picked men of the brigade."

"A sort of Admirable Crichton, eh?" suggested one of the other.

"Exactly, and a funny thing about him is that I can't recall what the fellow's right name is.

"We always called him Doc Grip, but that was a nickname of course; and it is odd that I haven't met him since the war closed and our regiment was mustered out of the service.

"But he hardly looks a day older, although he is a trifle more muscular than he was then."

By this time the other had come within hailing distance and Van Huyler accosted him.

"Hallo, Doc Grip, is that you or your ghost?" he cried.

"Myself in person and nary ghost!" the person addressed replied in a pleasant, musical voice, which to the practiced eye immediately showed signs of skillful training.

"You are the very man I want! Do you remember how you used to ride the quarter races in Arkansas?"

"Oh, yes, I've a very vivid remembrance of those jolly days."

"Can you ride now as well as you used to?"

"Oh, yes, I have been in the West, down among the cowboys for the last ten years, and about one-half of my time has been spent in the saddle."

"How lucky!"

And then he turned to the rest and said:

"Gentlemen, let me introduce you to my old friend and army comrade—by the way Doc I can't remember your right appellation. Only your nickname sticks in my memory."

The other laughed.

"That is generally the way, I believe. But I am not ashamed of the nickname."

"Strange as it may seem, Van Huyler, it has clung to me ever since the war time and a deuced sight more people know me now as Doc Grip than by my right name which is Jonathan Agricippa at your service."

"Well, with such a deuced odd name as that it isn't any wonder that Doc Grip clings to you," Van Huyler remarked.

Then he introduced him to his companions and explained what was wanted.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RACE.

"CERTAINLY! glad to have the pleasure of accommodating you," the young man replied immediately.

"Hurry up then and get into your harness—you have only five minutes to dress."

Conducted by one of the colored boys attached to Dwindlehurst racing corps, Doc Grip hurried into the stable but soon returned dressed in a complete jockey rig which fitted him splendidly.

And finely too the young man looked with his well-proportioned figure fully displayed by the tightly-fitting jockey dress.

"By Jove! your friend is both Apollo and Hercules combined!" Dwindlehurst exclaimed as the young man made his appearance, and then hearing the sound of the bell ran toward the horse.

The old trainer who had charge of Dwindlehurst stable—Johnny Murfee, one of the oldest and best men in the business—was waiting to give the new jockey a "leg" into the saddle, and, as he surveyed the stranger, was extremely well impressed with his appearance.

There was something about the man that, to the experienced eyes of the veteran, told he was a thorough horseman, and he judged from the way Doc Grip vaulted into the saddle and took up the reins that the Son of Hercules had a man on his back competent to pilot him to victory.

With a rapid glance Doc Grip had taken the measure of the horse as he ran up, and after reaching the saddle, while the beast was prancing around, conscious that he had a stranger on his back, but also conscious, from that peculiar instinct which nature has given to the horse, that his rider was a man who knew what he was about, took the opportunity to say a few words to the trainer.

"Inclined to be ugly, eh?"

"Rayther a nasty temper sometimes."

"Vicious or only highly-spirited?"

"Both, and more vicious than t'other."

"Can't bear either whip or spur, I suppose?"

"Neither! gets as ugly as a demon if he feels 'em."

"This is the match race, gentleman riders up, at catch weights, isn't it?"

"Yes, Dwindlehurst's Son of Hercules ag'in O'Gall's Kildare Colleen."

"O'Gall! I know him; a rare old scoundrel, who would as soon pull a horse and throw a race as eat his dinner."

"The very same!"

"Who rides his mare?"

"Jimmy Conners."

"The Irishman who was concerned in some trouble across the water?"

"Yes, that's the man."

"I know him, too—a good rider, but another totally unscrupulous fellow; but, I say, how is the mare? Does this brute stand any chance with her if he behaves himself and runs as he ought to?"

"Oh, yes; he has improved mightily this winter, and, if he will only run, can give the mare twenty pounds and beat her."

"It's a mile and a half dash, isn't it?"

"Yes; and if the beast will run, you can afford to make a waiting race of it; but the deuce of that is that when you come to the finish, and use the whip or spur to hurry him up, he is apt to sulk like the rankest cur that ever looked through a bridle."

"But there's the mare; they are waiting for you!"

Dwindlehurst and his party had proceeded to the quarter-stretch when Doc Grip had hurried into the house to dress, and their eyes being fixed anxiously on the horse after the rider had mounted, great was their astonishment to see the jockey, after his conversation with the trainer ended, give the horse his head, and instead of coming upon the track in the regular way by means of the gate, put the horse to the rail fence and leap him over it almost as lightly as a bird would have cleared it, and then, allowing the horse to go ahead at his own sweet will, come down the track to the starting-post at a rattling gallop.

There was a yell of applause from the audience which crowded the grand stand as the horse came rushing by.

And it was well deserved, for a prettier exhibition had never been witnessed on the track.

The horse was really a superb creature, and the rider sat the animal as though, like the ancient centaur, he was a part of the beast.

The betting men who had invested largely on the Irishman's mare looked disgusted as the steed came thundering down the track.

O'Gall, Mo. Edwards and the Creole, Clingman stood in a group.

"Tare and 'ounds!" cried O'Gall, "where the devil did this spaldeen come from?"

In his excitement the brogue, which was seldom apparent in his speech, came out strong.

"Upon my word, dear boy, I'm afraid we are all left!" observed Mo. Edwards anxiously.

"Joe Traddles isn't up but this fellow seems to be a better rider even than Joe!"

"I think I will have to make myself safe in this throng and hedge!" was the Jew's conclusion.

"Don't be after making a Judy of yourself!" O'Gall growled, all his natural Irish obstinacy aroused.

"Jimmy Conners has his orders and he'll break the heart of the beast at the post before they get off."

"It's a dozen or two false starts they will make, and that black beast will get so fractious that he will try to kick the head of his rider for all he sits him so nately."

"My very dear O'Gall, there's an old saying which recites that soft words butter no parsnips, and all your talk will not win this race if the black horse can outfoot your mare, and it is my opinion that he can, and so I'm going to try to hedge if I can."

To "hedge" in sporting parlance, is to bet in the opposite direction to which a man has been betting.

Mo. Edwards had staked his money that the mare would win.

Now he proposes to bet an equal amount that she would lose, so he would be safe no matter which way the race went.

And an acute sporting man by betting in this way when there are a number of horses in the race and the odds vibrate up and down is often enabled to make such a "book," that he stands to win money no matter which horse captures the race.

Edwards hurried away toward the betting stand, while O'Gall kept his position and with a gloomy brow watched the black horse gallop.

There was a disgusted look on the face of the Creole, too, as he watched the horse and noted how expert the rider seemed to be.

He was not a turf sharp and therefore, unlike the other two, was not able to calculate so closely in regard to the result of the race.

It was evident to him, though, that the rider seemed to have perfect control of the horse and

the animal, too, seemed to be good-tempered enough now.

"What lucky accident sent this man to help Dwindlehurst in this extremity?" the Creole muttered, as he gazed with an angry face upon the horse and rider.

"Is it possible that this carefully delivered blow is to be parried without the least trouble?"

"If Joe Traddles did not ride they said the horse had no chance, and now from obscurity springs this stranger, whom everybody seems to think is a better rider than Traddles!"

"The stars in their courses fight against me!"

And just at this moment an animated conversation was going on between two beautiful girls on the grand stand, who were dressed in the height of fashion and surrounded by a crowd of admirers.

Two well-known New York belles were they, Miss Gertrude Van Courtlandt and Miss Betina Campbell, both heiresses and firm friends, and on their breasts they wore the Son of Hercules colors, black and yellow.

Rumor said that Dwindlehurst was paying attention to Miss Van Courtlandt and that his suit was looked upon with a favorable eye by the young lady.

But she was rather straight-laced in her ideas and although she had come to see her lover's horse run, yet she totally disapproved of the idea of a gentleman interesting himself in any such sports.

Her companion was rather more liberal in her ideas, and when the Son of Hercules came thundering down the track she was immediately captivated by his appearance, and, to tell the truth, as much impressed with the rider's appearance as with the horse.

And this was a rather strange fact, for Miss Campbell, although a lively, jolly girl, was not particularly partial to young men, and though she had suitors by the score not one could boast that he was at all favored by the young heiress.

But the moment she caught sight of the rider her heart gave a great bound, for never before had her eyes rested upon a man who made any such impression as this stranger.

"Isn't it a beautiful sight?" she exclaimed, to Miss Van Courtlandt, as the horse came bounding along.

"He will win—I am sure of it!"

But Miss Van Courtlandt, secretly annoyed that the man whom she fancied above all the rest should have anything to do with racing or race-horses, took the opposite view out of sheer obstinacy.

"Oh, no, I think the other one will win," she replied.

"You don't dare to bet me a box of gloves on the race!" Miss Betina cried, defiantly.

"No, I am sure I don't. I wouldn't do such a thing for the world. I don't think that it is wise for ladies to bet like a pack of horrid gamblers."

"But I will tell you what I will do, since you seem to be so positive about the matter—just as if you knew any more about it than I do—and I am ready to admit that I don't know anything at all, and don't want to—I will give you a box of gloves if Mr. Dwindlehurst's horse wins."

"All right, and if the other horse wins I will give you a box of gloves, but we will not bet, dear, because I suppose, as you say, that it would be dreadful wicked, although all the men do it, and they don't seem to be any worse for it."

The bell rung for the horses to come to the "post."

Jimmy Conners, who was a short, thick-set fellow with a rather bull-like head and shifty, uncertain eyes, looked anxiously at his antagonist.

He had ventured to bet considerable money on his mount and he did not at all like the looks of the strange jockey.

It was evident that he was an excellent rider and he had succeeded in getting on good terms with the horse.

The Son of Hercules was flattering himself that he was having his own way, and yet he was conscious from the firm hand that the rider had on his rein that the time would probably come when the man would be apt to have his way.

The starter took up his position and the horses came up for the race, a solemn hush falling upon the multitude.

The black horse, nervous and excited, and understanding what was going on as well as any of the spectators, began to prance.

Under like circumstances the horse's jockey had usually been quick to use the whip or spurs upon him, and the result was the horse immediately became ugly, and then followed a kicking display.

But Doc Grip, understanding the nature of the animal, for he had ridden just such beasts before, refrained from using whip or spurs, but tried his best to soothe the animal.

The result was a false start, and the horses were called back, for the Son of Hercules was away behind.

The next time the horse went off well, and the cunning Irishman, perceiving that the horse was going all right, pulled in his mare so as to make another false start.

The starter cautioned Conners.

"You must bring your horse up," he said. "If you had urged the mare a little you would have got off all right."

"I shall drop the flag even if you are behind, if you are not careful."

Doc Grip rode up at that moment and overheard the last words.

"If the horse is going all right I am willing to call it a go, even if I am a dozen lengths behind," he said.

The starter nodded and the two galloped toward the starting-place.

The wielder of the flag was an old hand at the business, and he had penetrated Conners's game.

"He's going to try and worry the other horse until he gets his temper up," he murmured.

"Hang me! if I don't take the other fellow at his word. I'll let them go the next time they come up if the black is all right, even if he is behind, if it is not giving the mare too great a start."

Conners was annoyed at being rebuked by the starter, and so took occasion to vent his spite upon his opponent.

"Why don't you bring your horse up level so one can get off?" he exclaimed. "Do you want me to give you a quarter-mile start?"

"See here, my friend, you had better keep a civil tongue in your head or I'll dust your jacket with my whip in a way that you will be apt to despise," Doc Grip answered.

The Irishman grew scarlet with rage, and involuntarily took such a pull on the reins that the mare jerked her head up and frisked her tail in disgust.

"Upon my word! You will not dare to say that to me when we are out of the saddle!" Conners cried, hoarsely.

"Upon my word!" responded Doc Grip, imitating the other, "I will, on the first occasion, when you give me due provocation."

"I'll find the opportunity speedily enough when we are out of the saddle!" the Irishman retorted, red with rage.

"You will discover that I am on hand, I reckon."

And with this the conversation ended.

The horses wheeled, and again came up for the start.

This time Conners let the mare out, for he had hopes that the starter would be as good as his word and drop the flag, even if the black was a dozen lengths in the rear.

But, for once in his life, the Son of Hercules had made up his mind to behave himself, and started like a race-horse.

It was a "go!"

The flag dropped, and a great shout, "They're off!" arose from the multitude.

And Conners, turning his head, saw to his disgust the nose of the black at his quarter, and the Son of Hercules was going as steady as a clock, the strange jockey riding the beast with wonderful skill.

Conners, excellent jockey as he was, undoubtedly, was in a quandary.

Should he "call" upon the mare to do her best, and endeavor to "break the heart of the black," to use the racing term, or should he pull in the animal, allow the Son of Hercules to take the lead, and then come on with a rush at the finish.

In regard to the first, there was a question if the trick could be performed.

The horse was going well, and Conners was too good a judge not to see that he was a far better animal than he had been.

If he endeavored to force the pace, he might "pump the mare out," and have no speed left for the finish.

If he fell behind and allowed the Son of Hercules to get a couple of lengths to the good, there was a doubt if the advantage could be made up in the ending rally.

In this dilemma Conners came to the conclusion that he would not attempt to follow either course.

He would allow the mare to keep her lead and not force her unless it was absolutely necessary.

For a half-mile the two ran just about as they had started, and then the black commenced to draw up, and as he came alongside the Irishman, with a side glance, noticed that the beast was under a "strong pull;" evidently he was not doing his best but restrained by the careful hand of his jockey.

A mile was covered and then turning the bend the pair swung into the home-stretch.

"Here they come!" yelled a thousand throats.

And now Doc Grip gave the Son of Hercules his head and the black went by the mare as though she was standing still.

Conners plied both whip and spur.

Both aliko were useless.

No need to "persuade" the gallant black for he was rushing onward, looking every inch a race-horse as his grandfather, great Lexington did on the day when he ran the fastest four-mile heat on record.

There was a mighty shout. Black and yellow flash by the judges' stands and the Son of Hercules wins the race with twenty lengths to the good!

CHAPTER IX.

A QUARREL.

THE face of Clingman, the Creole, was white with rage as the ear-splitting yell went up from the multitude which told that the race was over, and heralded to the world the triumph of the Son of Hercules.

He clutched the railings of the fence against which he leaned and for a moment appeared as if he was going to faint, and then, with a mighty effort recovering himself, he shook his clinched fist at the happy group which surrounded Dwindlehurst, eager to offer their congratulations, only a short distance away, and muttered:

"The first blow has failed, but the second will not!" and then he hastened away.

The jockeys received the word from the judges that they might dismount and then cantered away toward the stables.

Doc Grip rode past the grand stand and was greeted with loud applause.

The public had backed the Son of Hercules largely and so had reason to be delighted with his success.

The two ladies of whom we have spoken sat in the front seat on the stand, and as Doc Grip rode past only some yards away, in a sudden burst of enthusiasm, Miss Campbell snatched her corsage bouquet from its place and tossed it to the rider.

With a grateful bow Doc Grip caught the bunch of flowers as it came sailing through the air.

And again the multitude shouted, pleased at the unexpected tribute to the successful rider.

Then, looking the beautiful girl full in the face, he bowed again.

The moment he had gone on his way, Miss Van Courtlandt turned to her friend in astonishment—astonishment that had a tinge of displeasure in it.

"What on earth did you do that for?" she exclaimed.

"You have caused the attention of every one on the stand to be directed to us. I think it is just awful for you to act so!"

"Nonsense! When you go to the theater or the opera you throw bouquets to the favorite artists, don't you?"

"Yes; but that is a different matter."

"Not at all. This gentleman rode the race splendidly. Didn't you hear what all the people around said—that it was a fine piece of work? And I am sure I ought not to grudge the man a little bunch of flowers, considering that I have won a whole box of gloves, thanks to him!"

"You didn't win the box; we didn't bet," responded the other, tartly.

"I said I would give them to you."

"Oh, yes! of course, and that isn't at all like betting!" and the beauty laughed.

"But it isn't right for you to throw your bouquet to such a fellow, a common jockey." And Miss Courtlandt's proud lip curled in contempt.

"Not a common jockey, but a very uncommon one, if these gentlemen around know anything about the matter," Miss Campbell retorted.

"You are always quick at an answer, but jesting will not alter the truth."

"But your statement isn't correct; you haven't got it right," the other persisted.

"He is not a common jockey at all. Listen to what the card says:

"Match race for ten thousand dollars a side. Dwindlehurst's Son of Hercules; O'Gall's Kildare Colleen. A mile and a half dash. Gentlemen riders."

"There it is, as plain as type can make it."

"Gentlemen riders! Do you comprehend, dear, not common jockeys, but gentlemen riders, and from his looks I feel sure that he is a gentleman, and there isn't any mistake about it."

"One of the curled and spoiled darlings of the town, you know," continued the merry girl.

"When I see Mr. Dwindlehurst I am going to ask him all about the fellow."

"Don't be foolish!" Miss Van Courtlandt replied, languidly, and here the conversation ceased.

The horses returned to the stables and the riders dismounted.

The stables occupied by the two racers were only a little way apart and the moment that Conners was out of the saddle he hastened to where Doc Grip was dismounting.

The latter saw him coming, and so, instead of going into the house kept his ground.

The Irishman had his riding-whip in his hand, and was beating a tattoo with it upon his leg as he came up.

It was evident at a glance that Conners was in a great rage.

"I would like to have the pleasure of sp'aking a few words wid yeess!" he exclaimed, the brogue coming out strong in his excitement.

"Certainly, as few, or as many as you like."

"You were after saying whin we were in the saddle a few moments ago, that if I didn't kape a civil tongue in my head you would be afther dusting my jacket with your whip."

"Exactly, that is what I said and what I will do if you give me provocation for it."

"You're a dirty blaggard."

Hardly had the words left his lips when the whip of Doc Grip whistled through the air and Conners received a blow right across the face.

The stroke was no light one, but administered with all the strength of Doc Grip's powerful arm, and the cut was so severe that it brought the blood.

With a howl of rage, Conners rushed upon the other, but Doc Grip jumped nimbly to one side, evading the attack, and then, as the Irishman rushed past him, unable to turn, so furious was the assault, the successful rider caught him by the back of the collar and administered a most terrible thrashing with the whip.

As he had threatened, Doc Grip dusted his jacket in the most thorough manner.

Conners struggled and writhed under the punishment, swearing at his antagonist in the most outrageous manner.

But the other never ceased his blows until a great crowd was gathered and the Irishman was as thoroughly thrashed a man as had ever been seen in this world.

Then, Doc Grip flung him from him and Conners, totally exhausted by his struggle, fell all in a heap.

By this time, O'Gall had arrived on the ground.

He was wild with rage at the treatment which his gentleman rider had received at the hands of the unknown.

O'Gall was in a dreadful state too on account of the defeat of his horse, a result which with Irish obstinacy he ascribed as due entirely to the stranger although now that the row was over it was plain to anybody who understood anything at all about turf matters that the Kildare Colleen had been overmatched and she had no business in a row with a horse like the Son of Hercules.

But, as we have said, O'Gall was an obstinate man, and he chose to regard the stranger as being the prime cause for the loss of the large amount of money which the row had cost him.

And now, not content with "putting him in the hole" for all the money, the fellow must thrash his gentleman rider as no man had ever been thrashed on the Monmouth course before.

O'Gall was just boiling over with rage.

"Ow, ow!" he cried, as he rushed up, moving his arms like the sails of a windmill.

"Is it murthered the man ye have? Oh, give me a club some of you till I knock out his dirty brains!"

"Oh, no, don't do that; he has been well thrashed and you ought to be content," observed Doc Grip pretending to believe that the Irishman meant the beaten man when he spoke.

By this time Conners was on his feet, having been assisted to rise by some friendly hands.

He had no idea of renewing the contest though. The young Irishman was no fool and by this time had become perfectly satisfied that he stood no chance at all in a personal encounter with a man like Doc Grip who seemed to have the muscles of a pugilist.

"It's you I m'an! you dirty blaggard, I'll be afther murtherin' yeess meself!"

And then O'Gall snatched a light cane from the hands of a man in the crowd who happened to be near him and made a rush at Doc Grip.

But in such an encounter as this it was not to be expected that when a man like the muscular young Irishman had gone for wool and returned shorn, a fellow like old O'Gall would succeed.

Doc Grip dodged the blow and with really marvelous ease, wrested the cane from O'Gall's hand and laid it over his shoulders and head in a manner that made the old Irishman howl with both rage and pain.

He essayed to close in with the inflicter of the chastisement, but Doc Grip easily avoided him and rained blow after blow upon him.

Unluckily for O'Gall, the cane was no flimsy reed, but a stout ratan, and the punishment it gave was enough to make a stout man wince.

About a minute O'Gall danced and then suddenly realizing that he had caught a Tartar, threw up his hands to protect his head and cried out:

"Enough, enough! I'm satisfied. Bad 'cess to ye, don't be afther murthering me in could blood!"

Doc Grip immediately ceased his blows at this appearance.

By this time the officials of the course had arrived on the spot and O'Gall, recognizing them, immediately cried for assistance.

"Upon me word, gentlemen, I'm glad ye have come!" he cried.

"I've been nearly murdered by this blaggard and as for poor Jimmy Conners, he has been kilt entirely!"

Shouts of disgust went up from those of the crowd who had witnessed the affray from the beginning.

"No, no!" they cried, "a fair fight and the Irishman got whipped!"

"It's no such thing! it's murthered we are and I'll have a warrant!" O'Gall howled.

By this time some of his friends had gathered around him and, by their advice, he was persuaded to withdraw.

Conners had already "made himself scarce," and the Park official turned to Doc Grip for an explanation.

"It is simple enough," he said, as quietly as though he had not been the hero of two "thrashing matches."

"The gentleman rider of the mare and I had some words on the course before the start."

"He spoke to me in a manner that I allow no man to speak without resenting it, and I told him plainly that if he didn't keep a civil tongue in his head I would dust his jacket for him on the first opportunity."

"So, after the race was over he renewed the discussion, insulted me and I thrashed him as he deserved to be thrashed."

"Then the owner of the horse not liking the way his man had been handled tried his luck and the result you know."

By this time Dwindlehurst and a party of his friends had contrived to force their way through the crowd, and the young millionaire hastened to interfere on behalf of the man who had so gallantly carried his colors to victory.

"Gentlemen, I witnessed the affair from the beginning through my glass and I am satisfied that this gentleman here is not to blame."

"Yes, ye'r not to blame!" came in a loud shout from the bystanders.

The crowd, after the usual fashion, was quite ready to throw up their caps and cheer for the victorious party, the more so that in this case the victor had the right on his side.

"Of course we will have to have an investigation," one of the officials declared.

"Certainly, I am quite agreeable," Doc Grip observed.

"And I will be responsible for this gentleman's appearance at any time," Dwindlehurst hastened to add.

And this ended the incident.

Doc Grip entered the stable and resumed his own clothes; the crowd went back to the track as the next race had been called.

While they waited for Doc Grip to come out Dwindlehurst questioned Van Huyler in regard to him.

"I say, this fellow is all right, isn't he—a gentleman and all that sort of thing?"

"Oh, yes, a brother officer in the army, and a man who wears the straps is entitled to be called a gentleman, I think."

"But then he comes of a good family too, well-educated, although I don't believe he has much money."

"Oh, money be hanged, as long as he is a gentleman; that is all we want. I like the fellow, but I don't wish to be responsible for anything off-color, you know."

"I'll be his sponsor!" Van Huyler declared, warmly.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE GRAND STAND.

WHEN Doc Grip came from the stable arrayed in his own clothes, Dwindlehurst approached him and offering his hand said:

"My dear fellow, I am ever so much obliged to you."

Doc Grip took the proffered hand, shook it earnestly, and gazing into the face of the other with a peculiar expression on his features replied:

"Don't mention it, I beg; I am really happy at being able to be of service to you."

"You piloted the horse to victory like an old stager. I doubt if there is a jockey in the country who could have done the trick better."

"Why, you can't have any idea what a service you have done me. I am green at this racing business, you know, and I got in terribly deep on this match before I knew what I was doing."

"Why, old fellow, do you know, if the mare had won, I should have dropped nearly a hundred thousand dollars!"

Doc Grip expressed his surprise.

"You see, I'm green as I tell you, and the turf sharps took advantage of the fact."

"And a hundred thousand dollars, you know, is no joke even to a man in my position, and the fun of the thing is that I arranged my book so badly that I will only win about fifty thousand on the race."

"Well, that is not doing so badly," Doc Grip replied, with a smile.

"Most men would consider fifty thousand dollars to be a fortune."

"Oh, yes, that is true; but my point is that I must have managed matters very badly when I stand to lose on the race double what I can possibly gain."

"Yes, yes, that goes without saying, as the French have it."

"And, by the by, you know, you divvy with me on the race—that was the arrangement I had with Traddles," Dwindlehurst hastened to say.

"I beg your pardon, I'm afraid I don't exactly understand."

"Why, you get half of what I gain."

"Oh, no, no, such an arrangement would be decidedly unfair."

"I was going to give Traddles half," the young millionaire urged.

"Well, I haven't the pleasure of Mr. Traddles's acquaintance, but I must say that if he made any such bargain as that with you, he must be of the tribe of Israel, and is probably a lineal descendant of one of the money-changers who were driven out of the temple."

"Oh, no, he's a jolly good fellow!" the millionaire declared.

"You will be sure to like the man when you come to know him, and he didn't make any bargain with me at all, although he might have done so if he had been inclined, for he had a fine chance, as it was said he was about the only gentleman rider I could get hold of who would be able to ride that vicious brute; although, from the easy way you get along with him, I am inclined to think that he isn't half as black as he is painted, for you won, 'hands down!'"

"The horse happened to be in a good-humor, but I don't think there is any doubt that he is a very uncertain animal."

"I told Joe I would divvy with him, and to do the fellow justice, I suppose he thought I meant divvy on the stake—on the ten thousand, you know—but I didn't; I meant on the whole thing, on all I 'got on.'"

"I couldn't really accept it—it would make me feel like a beggar," Doc Grip protested, warmly.

"Half the stake would be a rich reward for a few minutes' work like the riding of this race."

"In fact, it wasn't like work to me; it was play, and I don't know when I have enjoyed anything more."

"And I'll tell you what you can do, you can give me a ring—a little diamond, or something of that sort, that I can wear in memory of this race, a trophy of victory, you know."

"You shall have the ring, but I can't put value enough in such a gift to express my satisfaction at the masterly way in which you won the race."

"You are no gambler or minstrel man to wear a ring as big as a chestnut, I can see that with half an eye, and you must accept your divvy. I shall be seriously angry if you don't."

"After you get the money, you know, my dear fellow, you can do what you like with it. Build a church, endow a hospital, or throw it away in any manner that you like, but I shall insist upon your taking it."

"Oh, no, I can't do it, it would be sheer robbery!" the other replied, decidedly.

"Hang me! if you ain't about the most obstinate man I ever met, and if you hadn't done me such a good turn to-day I should be inclined to get seriously angry."

"But I am determined to have my way, and if you will not take the money I will put it in the bank in your name and subject to your order; then I shall get rid of it, and if you don't take it, why, it is not my fault."

Doc Grip laughed, for he saw that if the young man carried out this scheme nothing he could do would interfere with it.

"And, by the by, old fellow you must take up your quarters with me while you remain in the city," Dwindlehurst said in the heartiest possible manner.

"I have gathered from what Mr. Huyler said that you are not a resident of New York."

"No, only here on a little business."

"Well, then, you must make my house your home while you remain in town. You will be much more comfortable than at a hotel, and equally at liberty to do as you like."

"But you don't know anything about me," Doc Grip urged, a peculiar look on his face.

"I am a total stranger to you, and I may be the most bitter enemy you have in the world for aught you know."

The two were standing a little apart from the rest, so that this conversation was not overheard by the others, who were busy chatting with the old trainer, congratulating him on the victory that the stable had achieved.

Dwindlehurst laughed outright at this idea for it struck him as being exceedingly comical.

"You my enemy! Nonsense! I havn't an enemy in the world that amounts to anything, as far as I know."

"Ah, but this is a very uncertain world and as the French say, it is the unexpected that is always happening."

"Oh well, I am not at all afraid, and am willing to risk it, if you are. Mr. Huyler vouches for you. He says that you were an officer in his regiment, and I feel sure from what little I have seen of you that you are a gentleman, and I shall be pleased to receive you as a guest at my house."

"Hang it, old fellow, ain't you going to let me have my own way in anything?"

Doc Grip laughed at the serio-comic appeal, and, seemingly actuated by a sudden impulse, extended his hand, which was warmly clasped by the other.

"All right, I shall be proud to come, and accept the invitation in the same frank spirit in which it is tendered."

The two men shook hands warmly, and then Dwindlehurst said:

"Will you join our party on the grand stand, if you haven't anything better to do?"

"Certainly; I shall be pleased."

"There's some charming lady friends of ours who are just dying to make the acquaintance of the gentleman who rode the Son of Hercules to victory; eh, Huyler?"

"Oh, yes," responded the other.

"I had to rehearse your history for their benefit, and tell how you used to ride the quarter races down in Rackensack in the old war times. By the by, do you remember how General Steele brought down that bled brown Morgan mare, and how you cleaned out the pockets of the

general and all his staff with the little Indian pony that you picked up on the retreat just after the battle of the Saline—how the pony jumped off so quickly at the crack of the starter's pistol that you had covered half the distance before the Morgan mare got under way?"

"Oh, yes."

And then the two indulged in a hearty laugh at the remembrance of the jolly old times down on the Arkansas when war's dark wings overpread the land.

To the grand stand the party proceeded, and there Doc Grip was introduced to the ladies, including the two belles of the party, whose acquaintance the reader has already made, Miss Van Courtlandt and Miss Campbell.

On the way, Dwindlehurst had openly cautioned the stranger to be careful what he said to Miss Campbell, as Van Huyler had begun to consider her to be his own exclusive property, and Van Huyler had retorted that he never thought of such a thing and that Dwindlehurst's caution was only a cunning trick to divert Doc Grip's attention to Miss Betina and so keep him from noticing Miss Van Courtlandt, who had tangled Dwindlehurst's susceptible heart up in the meshes of her glorious raven-black hair.

And so the young men jested merrily as they proceeded on their way.

The victorious rider was cordially received by the ladies, and Miss Campbell made room for him to sit by her side.

The gentleman gladly accepted the invitation for Miss Campbell was an acknowledged beauty with her red-gold hair, big blue eyes and clear red-and-white complexion.

Then, too, she was a lively and intelligent girl, who had been splendidly educated, and being able to converse on almost any subject, was excellent company.

"I enjoyed your victory very much, Mr. Agrippa," she said:

"The more so, perhaps, because it was worth a box of gloves to me."

"Did you wager, then, on the success of the Son of Hercules?"

"Oh, no, the gloves are to come from my friend, Miss Van Courtlandt," and she nodded to that lady, who was busily engaged in conversation with Dwindlehurst and Miss Van Huyler.

"And she doesn't believe in betting, but when I challenged her she declared she would give me a box of gloves if your horse won, and I, on my part, said I would give her one if you were beaten, but we didn't bet," and the young girl laughed merrily.

"Oh, yes, I see; quite a different matter."

"Yes, as the old adage says,

"It is strange what difference there should be, Betwixt tweedledum and tweedledee."

"Not very far from the truth, eh?"

"By the way, wasn't there some disturbance over by the stables when you went to dismount after the race?" Miss Campbell asked, with an apparently innocent, but in reality searching gaze at the face of her companion.

Through her opera-glass she had witnessed nearly all of the affair, the gathering of the crowd during the latter part of it interrupting her view.

She had seen that the quiet gentleman at her side had soundly thrashed his antagonist, and his inspection was for the purpose of seeing if there was any mark of the conflict visible upon Doc Grip.

But as the reader knows, he hadn't received even a scratch.

"Yes, there was some little trouble, I believe," he replied, carelessly.

"It doesn't take much to gather a crowd on a race-track."

And then his gaze happened to fall upon the glasses—powerful field-glasses too—which she held in her lap.

Her eyes followed his and when his gaze was raised their eyes encountered each other.

Miss Campbell's conscious color crimsoned her face; for a moment she looked embarrassed and then broke into a hearty laugh.

"I am fairly caught, I suppose," she observed, frankly.

"I presume you suspect that, with the aid of the glasses, it was not a difficult matter for me to see what the trouble was?"

"Yes, you could most certainly see if you had happened to be looking through your glasses in that direction at the time, I should think."

"I might as well make a frank confession," Miss Campbell remarked with a roguish smile.

"I was watching your triumphant progress to the stables by the aid of my glasses, and, when you dismounted and I saw the other rider come toward you, I suspected there was going to be trouble, for I had seen you had made him angry on the course just before you started by something you said to him."

"You are a close observer," Doc Grip remarked.

"You forget, I had a weighty stake—a box of gloves pending on the result," she replied, laughing.

"The trouble was in a measure forced upon me," Doc Grip explained.

"The gentleman forgot himself and addressed

me in a manner which was decidedly uncivil, and although I am the last man in the world to become embroiled in a quarrel, yet it is sometimes impossible to avoid such affairs."

"You do not seem to have suffered materially," she remarked, with a charming smile.

"Oh, no, I got off pretty well, but really the affair didn't amount to anything; it only lasted a few moments."

"In all such matters as this I have always tried to act on the advice that the Old Courtier in the play of 'Hamlet' gives to his son, who is about to go abroad:

"Beware of being drawn into a quarrel, but once in conduct yourself so that your adversary may have cause to beware of thee!"

"I don't suppose I have the quotation exactly right, for it is a long time since I have seen the play, but that is the idea."

"Aren't you afraid that you will have some future trouble with this Mr. Conners?—that is the name of the man, you know, and I am well acquainted with him by reputation."

"Oh, no, I guess not," Doc Grip answered, carelessly.

"As I said, I know something of the man. A friend and schoolmate of mine, had a brother who was inclined to be a little wild, and in some way he encountered and quarreled with this Mr. Conners, who pretends to be an Irish gentleman of property, and on account of some political trouble has been obliged to leave his native country."

"Well, my friend's brother quarreled with him; I believe he accused him of cheating at a game of cards, blows were struck and this Mr. Conners challenged him."

"They met and this young man was severely wounded, so severely that he has been obliged to go abroad for his health, and they say he will never be a well man again."

"Isn't it dreadful?"

"Yes, and that is a possible way that this Irish gentleman has of telling people that they mustn't too closely examine his method of handling the printed pasteboards when they play cards with him," Doc Grip remarked in his quiet, sarcastic way.

"He may challenge you?" and Miss Campbell cast an earnest glance at the face of the other.

"He may, but it is not likely," the gentleman remarked in a non-committal way.

"And if he does?"

"I shall most probably go out and do my best to shoot the fellow with as little compunction as though he was a mad-dog."

"But he is a noted duelist and they say a dead shot."

"With the dueling pistols, to which he is accustomed, undoubtedly, but if he challenges me I will have the choice of weapons and I will not choose the arm with which he is expert."

At this point a gentleman beckoned Dwindlehurst to come to the aisle. He complied, and then, after a brief conversation with him, the millionaire signaled to Doc Grip.

CHAPTER XI.

COMING TO A CONCLUSION.

"You will have to excuse me for a moment," our hero said to the lady.

"Certainly."

And then Doc Grip joined the pair.

"Here's a deuce of a fuss!" Dwindlehurst exclaimed.

"What is the matter?" inquired Doc Grip.

"O'Gall and Conners are after you with a sharp stick," the young millionaire replied.

"Those are the two fellows to whom I was obliged to give a lesson, I presume?"

"The same; both are Irishmen and inclined to be hot-headed, and they have come to the conclusion that nothing but your gore will satisfy them," Dwindlehurst observed.

"Well, I hope they are not obstinate in that opinion, for I don't think I have any more gore than I need."

"By Jove! old fellow, I tell you it isn't going to be any joking matter!" Dwindlehurst exclaimed, earnestly.

"You gave them a terrible thrashing, and in public, too, and, in their opinion, nothing but blood will wipe out the disgrace."

"They have the old-time notion, I see."

"Oh, yes; they are gentlemen of high degree, especially Conners, and by thrashing him in public you have offered him a mortal insult, and he is going to challenge you."

"O'Gall, too, although he doesn't make as much row about his gentility as the other man, feels that it will be necessary for him to take some steps to prove that he cannot be horse-whipped with impunity, and so, egged on by the other, he is determined to call you to the field of honor."

"Of course, very natural," Doc Grip observed with a laugh.

"His pride and flesh are both injured by the thrashing which I inflicted, and now in order to heal his hurts he is going to give me a chance with either sword or pistol to cut his thread of life in twain."

"Yes, it is deuced odd, isn't it?" Van Huyler exclaimed.

"But that is the logic of the *duello*, and although dueling has rather gone out of fashion,

yet in this case I don't exactly see what you are going to do about it, for if you don't give the fellows the satisfaction which they demand they will be apt to kick up such a deuced row about it that it will not be pleasant."

"I understand," Doc Grip remarked, with a smile.

"Both of these gentlemen are members of the blue-blooded aristocracy, and therefore not subject to the rules which govern common people."

"To the average man a challenge nowadays is a matter to be treated with contempt, if not with ridicule, and it is only in the South, where a great deal of the so-called spirit of chivalry still survives, or in the wild border regions of the far West that an invitation to mortal combat cannot be lightly treated."

"Yes, that is very true," Dwindlehurst observed.

"And there is a little of that absurd spirit to be found among some of our young fellows here in New York."

"Men, you know, who have been so highly favored by fortune that they have more money than brains; that is, if it can be considered lucky to be so situated."

"I am afraid that the majority of men would rather have money than brains, if they had free choice," Doc Grip remarked.

"Yes, there isn't much doubt about that," Van Huyler hastened to observe.

"Of course it is all nonsense for any man possessed of the least bit of brains to allow himself to be troubled by any remarks that such noodies may make, yet still for all that it isn't pleasant to be called a coward even when the affront is given by men of this class."

"Not the least doubt about that. A gentleman ought not to take any notice if he happens to run against a street rascal and the fellow blackguards him; yet it is disagreeable, to put it mildly, and if the gentleman feels that he can thrash the scamp, I hold he is perfectly justified in so doing," Doc Grip replied.

"So in this case, while I really do not care the snap of my finger what any of these gilded youths around town may say about me, and still less what these two fellows and their associates may say, yet I do not feel inclined to give any of them an opportunity to post me as a coward; and so if they are not satisfied with what they have already received at my hands, and are anxious for more, I feel decidedly like accommodating them to the best of my ability."

"It is an awful unpleasant matter," the young millionaire observed.

"One of those kind, agreeable friends who are always so eager to tell anything that they think will be apt to worry you, reported to me that both O'Gall and Conners are raging about

in a terrible way, swearing they have been insulted in the grossest manner, and that nothing but your heart's blood can atone for the offense,

and my informant further added they declared that a challenge would be sent to you by both of them as soon as they could find friends to act for them.

"And this is why I ventured to disturb you, for I thought you ought to know what was going on."

"Much obliged. Of course under such circumstances, a man must have time to prepare for any such picnic as this is likely to be," Doc Grip remarked.

"Yes, they mean business I think," the young millionaire observed.

"You see both of the men are rather peculiarly situated. Both O'Gall and Conners aspire to be somebody."

"They call themselves gentlemen and want it understood that they move in good society. Of course, there isn't any more chance for either one of them to be recognized by the majority of men who really amount to anything than for a camel to crawl through the eye of a needle, but there is a certain class interested in sporting matters, men like myself, for instance, who have the *entree* into good society, and yet owing to a liking for out-door sports, we mingle with these fellows who are a little off-color as far as their reputation is concerned."

"Yes, I understand," said Doc Grip. "And it is a strange fact that if a gentleman desires to indulge in field sports he is obliged to associate more or less with men whom, under other circumstances, he would disdain to notice; and the joke of the matter is that all such fellows are always terribly afraid that they will not be treated as equals by men whose shoes they are hardly worthy to black."

"It is the old idea though; you can't offer a greater insult to the dirtiest rascal in the street than to tell him that he isn't a gentleman."

"That is it, exactly!" Van Huyler exclaimed.

"These rascals know that their claim to be considered gentlemen rests on extremely unsubstantial grounds and so they are always prompt to resent any imputation that they are not the genuine article, thinking that by so doing they will make the world believe that they are what they pretend to be."

"Yes, these are the fellows who talk so fluently about the 'code of honor' and what is due from one gentleman to another," Dwindlehurst remarked.

"And naturally the outrageous thrashing you bestowed so liberally upon this precious pair has wounded them in their tenderest point."

"Both corporeally and mentally," Van Huyler interposed.

"The case is perfectly plain to me," Doc Grip observed.

"Under the circumstances it is absolutely necessary for the pair to do something."

"If they submitted quietly to the affront which I bestowed upon them, all the rest of the gentlemen of their kidney would be apt to make mouths at them, for these rascals are always glad of a chance to laugh at each other's expense."

"Of course you are not obliged to meet these men even if they do challenge you," the millionaire suggested with a side glance at the quiet face of Doc Grip.

"They are a brace of rascals, no doubt, and a gentleman would be justified in refusing to go out with them."

"Oh, no, I will meet them if they are anxious for it," the other replied, immediately.

"I will not give them the satisfaction of declaring that I am afraid to meet them. They will not have an opportunity to post me for a coward."

"I cannot boast of much experience in this line but I trust I will not disgrace myself when the time comes."

"As the challenged party you will have the choice of weapons, and that gives you an advantage," Van Huyler observed.

"Yes, I am aware of that. Suppose I fall back on my southwestern experience and choose double barreled shot-guns?" Doc Grip suggested.

Both of his companions indulged in a hearty laugh at the idea.

"Such a proposition would astound them, I am sure," Dwindlehurst replied.

"They will expect either pistols or swords and both claim to be experts with either weapon."

"If their stories are to be believed, O'Gall and Conners have figured as principals upon the field of honor a half-a-dozen times, and each and every time they were the victors in the fight."

"Of course," Doc Grip observed, with sarcastic emphasis.

"Such fellows are always the heroes of their own stories."

"But if I meet them upon the field of honor it will not be with either pistol or sword, although I have a fair knowledge of both weapons, but I shall choose rifles."

"I'll lay a hundred to one that Mo Edwards is bringing the challenge!" exclaimed Van Huyler, abruptly.

CHAPTER XII.

COMING TO A CONCLUSION.

THE young New Yorker had discerned the burly figure of the Jew bookmaker approaching, and, from the peculiar way in which the wily Mo. carried himself, immediately jumped to the conclusion that the Jew was the bearer of a challenge.

"Who is the gentleman with him?" asked Dwindlehurst, referring to the young Creole, Rodament Clingman, who accompanied Mo. Edwards.

"I can't really say," Van Huyler replied, after a glance at Clingman.

"He is a stranger to me, although I noticed him at the hotel last night and on the course this morning."

The three were standing apart from the crowd so that if the new-comers had any important communication to deliver, which they desired should not be overheard they had an excellent opportunity.

The Jew bookmaker approached with the air of a man who had the weight of an empire upon his shoulders.

His cheeks were puffed out, and he rolled his head from side to side as he endeavored to assume an air of importance, which suited ill with his pudgy figure and decidedly comical appearance.

"Mr. Dwindlehurst, this gentleman is an acquaintance of yours. I believe?" the Jew remarked, as he halted in front of the young millionaire after bestowing upon him an extremely polite salute.

"Yes, sir."

"Will you have the kindness to introduce me, as I have an important communication to make to him."

"Certainly. Mr. Moses Edwards—Doctor Jonathan Agrippa."

The gentlemen acknowledged the introduction in a suitable manner, and the Jew introduced the young Creole to the others.

After this ceremony was performed, he came to the object of his mission.

"I regret to be obliged to inform you, Mr. Agrippa, that I have an unpleasant task to perform," and the old Jew puffed out his cheeks and endeavored to assume an imposing manner.

"Sorry to hear it, sir," Doc Grip replied, politely.

"Yes, sir, I come as the representative of Mr. James Conners, who considers that he has been affronted by you in the most outrageous manner."

"Conners is the man who rode the mare?"

"Yes, sir."

"And whom I thrashed so soundly?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I guess he has reason, then, to think that I have used him pretty badly," Doc Grip observed, in the most matter-of-fact way.

"As I said before, it is an unpleasant business, and I am sorry that any trouble has occurred. Mr. Conners feels that he has been grossly insulted, and as his representative I have waited upon you to demand satisfaction."

"Of course; it is only natural, under the circumstances."

"Mr. Conners is a gentleman, sir—an Irish gentleman—and in his country it is customary, when any such trouble occurs, for the parties to settle the matter upon the field of honor."

"He is aware that in the United States dueling is not looked upon with favor, but he hopes that, having so rudely insulted him, you will not refuse him the satisfaction to which as a gentleman he is entitled, and take refuge behind the public opinion which condemns the *duello*."

"That is, to put it in plain words, he hopes that after having thrashed him I will not refuse to meet him in deadly combat?"

"Exactly."

"And if I should refuse, no doubt he would post me as a coward all over town?"

"Yes, it is very probable that he would take some such action," the Jew responded, with a significant nod.

"He will not have to go to that trouble. I am his man, and if you bear a hostile message I am ready to receive it and give to it all the attention it deserves."

"I regret, too, to be obliged to say I shall have to claim your attention to something of the same kind," Clingman remarked, now for the first time joining in the conversation.

"I am at your command, sir," Doc Grip rejoined, bowing, politely.

"Really I ought not to be mixed up in the affair at all," Clingman hastened to explain.

"I am almost a total stranger to the gentleman who did me the honor to ask me to be his second, Mr. O'Gall, but in the part of the country from which I come—the extreme South—it is held to be right never to refuse to render assistance in such a case when it is asked. So, when Mr. O'Gall, smarting under the chastisement which he had received from you, declared that nothing but a hostile meeting would satisfy him, and, on the spur of the moment asked me if I would act as his second, I according to the school in which I was educated, could not refuse.

"I enter into this explanation so you will understand, Mr. Agrippa, that as far as I am concerned there is not the least feeling on my part in regard to the matter."

Doc Grip had watched the face of the young Creole intently while he was delivering the speech, and though he had such a command over his features that none of the men present could detect that he took any particular interest in the speaker, yet an expert in reading men's minds by their faces—one able to look behind the mask—would have detected that Doc Grip was puzzled by something about Clingman and did not know exactly what to make of him.

"I understand, sir," Doc Grip remarked, "and so Mr. O'Gall wants satisfaction?"

"Yes, sir," the Creole replied.

"But I presume, Mr. Edwards, that, as you spoke first, your principal has the claim to the first meeting?" Doc Grip observed, turning to the old Jew.

"Oh, yes, decidedly!" immediately cried Edwards.

"It doesn't make the least difference to me," the challenged man replied, carelessly.

"I am ready to give both of the gentlemen all the satisfaction they want, and I haven't the least choice in regard to who shall come first."

"Possibly though, upon consideration, I would prefer to meet Mr. Conners first, and after we conclude the business, Mr. O'Gall may come to the belief that the remedy will be worse than the disease."

The tone in which Doc Grip spoke was significant, and his meaning was not lost upon his hearers.

If Conners was either killed or badly wounded, the chances were about a thousand to one that O'Gall would not be anxious to meet a similar fate.

"Of course, as Mo. Edwards spoke first on behalf of his principal, I will not attempt to interfere with him," Clingman remarked.

"Then, on behalf of Mr. Conners, I make a formal demand for satisfaction," the old Jew declared, in a pompous way.

"I shall be glad to oblige him," Doc Grip replied; and then he bent his eyes inquiringly upon the young millionaire and the New Yorker.

Both of the two were quick to understand the meaning of the glance, but Van Huyler anticipated Dwindlehurst in speaking.

"Allow me to be your second!" he exclaimed.

"Certainly, I shall be delighted," Doc Grip replied.

"I am not altogether a novice in such matters," the young man explained.

"I spent four years in France and Germany, pursuing my studies, and several times was called upon to take part in affairs of honor, both as principal and second; so I think I may fairly claim to be pretty well posted in regard to such matters."

"Glad to hear it!" exclaimed Mo. Edwards, with a swagger.

"I am pretty well up in the 'code' myself. I was in business in Italy for some years, and of course, had my share of all that sort of thing."

"There wasn't a man in the party who believed this story, but all of them were too polite to tell the man to his face that his statement was an arrant falsehood."

"As the challenged party my principal has the right to name the time, place and weapons," Van Huyler observed, proceeding at once to business.

"Yes, that is all right, of course," Mo. Edwards remarked, with a sagacious nod.

"We'll settle the weapons first as that is the most important point."

The old Jew nodded and looked wise.

"We will choose rifles at fifty paces."

This announcement was a "stunner," to use the popular word, and Mo. Edwards immediately raised his voice in expostulation.

"Oh, my goodness, Mister Van Huyler, you surely will not choose rifles?"

His instructions from his principal were, that as he was equally expert with both sword and pistol, it didn't matter a particle of difference to him which was chosen.

But Conners had never for a moment thought that any weapon but one of these two would be selected, and the moment that Van Huyler spoke of rifles, the old Jew understood that his principal would be placed at a disadvantage if he did not succeed in getting Van Huyler to name either swords or pistols.

"That is my choice and no mistake!" Van Huyler answered, emphatically.

"But rifles are no weapons for gentlemen to use," the old Jew urged.

"Oh, yes, they are!"

"Oh, no; I never heard of such a thing! In Europe it is always swords or pistols."

"In Ireland, Mr. Conners's home, it is usually pistols; on the Continent swords; but Mr. Conners did not wish to take any advantage, and he said it did not matter to him, although he was more used to pistols than swords, never having fought a duel with swords, yet he did not object to them."

"Certainly not, and that is where he is sensible," Van Huyler replied, immediately.

"According to the laws of the *duello*—the rules which govern these hostile meetings—he hasn't the least bit of right to object to any recognized weapon."

"If I had chosen double-barreled shot-guns now, a weapon which is frequently used in the Southwest, by the way, he might have reason to protest."

"But rifles are recognized by the code, for affairs of honor have been decided by their aid."

"But in Europe, you know—" protested Mo. Edwards.

"Ah, yes, my dear Mr. Edwards, but we are not in Europe now!" interposed Van Huyler quickly.

"This affair is going to come off on the soil of the New World, and we cannot be governed by the rules which are in vogue in the old countries."

"Besides it is a doubtful question if a man could rightfully decline to fight with rifles on the other side of the water."

"It is not an unusual weapon, but one which every gentleman ought to know how to use."

"This choice is entirely unexpected to me," the other remarked, evidently very much bothered by the surprise which had been sprung upon him.

"Oh, well, in a game of this kind it is the sort of thing you must look for."

"You mustn't expect, you know, that your adversary is going to play right into your hands."

"Rifles are my weapons, and I shall not yield the point."

"I presume I will have to see my principal," the Jew observed.

"Certainly, that is all right, and if he hasn't the pluck to face my man with rifles, it is all right," Van Huyler remarked coolly.

"We are not the party who are doing the challenging, you know. We are not anxious. We think the advantage is rather on our side, and we mean to keep it that way if we can."

"What do you say in regard to the time and place?" Mo. Edwards asked.

"To-night at twelve o'clock; there's a full moon, so there will be plenty of light, and the place—the beach just above Shark River, which will be lonely enough at that hour."

"Very well, I will see my principal and then let you know."

Edwards and the Creole retraced their steps.

"He'll fight!" Dwindlehurst exclaimed. "The fellow is an Irishman and game enough!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DUEL.

The young millionaire was right in his conjecture. Conners was game, although he did not like the idea of fighting with rifles, yet rather than give up the chance of executing vengeance upon the man who had put such an open disgrace upon him, he resolved to meet Doc Grip with the weapons which he had chosen.

"I would much rather have fought with either pistols or swords," he observed, when the old Jew made known to him the result of the deliberations.

Conners and O'Gall were together in a quiet nook, impatiently awaiting the return of the envoys.

"With either of those two weapons I believe I could have laid the fellow out, without the risk of getting a scratch myself; but when it comes to rifles, although I used to be counted a pretty fair shot, yet I am rather rusty now, for I don't think I have had one in my hands for fully five years."

Mr. Edwards shook his head, and even the usually reserved Creole looked grave.

"Upon my word, Conners, I am afraid you have got yourself into a bad box," the old Jew remarked.

"I don't know anything about it, of course, but I have an idea that this fellow is an expert rifle-shot."

"I rather flatter myself that I am a pretty good judge of mankind, and from the vast experience I have enjoyed during the past twenty years, am generally able to pick out men who will be apt to prove dangerous."

"And upon my word, I assure you, Conners, I consider this fellow a particularly ugly customer."

"He's no Eastern man, you know, but one of those Westerners; from his appearance I should set him down for a Texan, or one of those border fellows, for, to my thinking, there is a peculiar air about him which suggests the quiet desperado."

"Oh, nonsense!" exclaimed the Irishman, in his impetuous, overbearing way.

"The fellow is a fraud, to use the American term."

"He is a bigger and a stronger man than I am, and that is the reason why he got the best of the fight I had with him."

"He knew he had the advantage, and that is why he provoked me to an encounter, but when it comes to meeting me with the weapons of war, the chances are great that he will show the white feather."

"Don't you believe it, dear boy, don't you believe it!" Mo. Edwards exclaimed, earnestly.

"I would be willing to lay a thousand to one that the fellow is a dead shot with the rifle and that you are making a great mistake in meeting him with that weapon."

"Nonsense! what do you know about it?" Conners exclaimed in a tone of supreme contempt.

"You have a fine judgment when it comes to betting on a horse-race, but in a matter of this kind you are out of your element."

O'Gall had listened anxiously to the conversation, and it was plain from the expression on his face that he did not agree with Conners.

He had the highest possible opinion of the old Jew's judgment as far as men were concerned, and took no stock at all in Conners's rash and hastily formed opinions.

"Well, how did you arrange my affair?" he asked, addressing Clingman.

"I didn't take any particular steps; I couldn't under the circumstances," the Creole explained.

"Of course I introduced myself and stated that I acted as your representative."

"The gentleman expressed his perfect willingness to give you all the satisfaction you required but until his affair with Mr. Conners here is settled nothing more can be done."

"I've no doubt, though," Clingman observed, after reflecting upon the matter for a moment, "that if you are in a hurry for a hostile meeting, the matter can be arranged to-night after he gets through with Mr. Conners, if your man is lucky enough to prove the victor."

"Upon me wourd, when ye find me afther facing a man wid rifles at fifty paces whom me fri'nd, Mo. Edwards, thinks is a dead shot, ye can be afther clapping me in a lunatic asylum!" the old Irishman exclaimed, the brogue coming out strong in his excitement.

"So, the fellow has scared you with his rifle business?" Conners exclaimed in contempt.

"I've been out in me time wid both swords and pistols; I want you to understand that, Mister Jim Conners!" exclaimed the old man in a rage. "And there niver was a drop of coward blood in the veins of an O'Gall."

"But that is no rason why I should be fool enough to go out wid a man who would be certain to bore a hole through me, widout giving me the laste taste of a chance to sarve him the same."

"It's a mighty little I know of a rifle!"

"Upon me wourd, I have great doubts if I ever had one of the tools in me hands."

"Under the circumstances, then, I think that Mr. O'Gall is justified in not being willing to engage in an encounter when all the advantages

are on the side of his antagonist," the Creole observed, gravely.

Clingman was a shrewd observer, and understood exactly how the old man felt in regard to the matter.

In the first flush of his rage at being so thoroughly thrashed by the stranger, and inspired by the example of Conners, who had declared that nothing but the heart's blood of the offender could satisfy him, O'Gall had determined to challenge the man to mortal combat, and so had deputed the young Creole, who happened to be in his immediate neighborhood, to bear a hostile message.

But now that his rage had time to cool, and he had reflected upon the matter, he had come to the conclusion that it would be a foolish way to seek satisfaction for the outrage which had been put upon him by giving the man who had punished him so severely a chance to prepare him for a graveyard ride.

The fact that the offender had chosen to fight with rifles, afforded him a chance to get out of the scrape in which his rashness had involved him, and he was not sorry for it.

"Certainly not!" O'Gall exclaimed, decidedly.

"And since nothing has been settled, we'll not be affer going further in the matter, do ye mind?"

"Well, you can back out if you want to!" exclaimed Conners, in his reckless way.

"But I am not going to do so. I'll meet the fellow to-night and lay him out as stiff as a wedge!"

"Yes, but the rifles?" suggested Mo. Edwards, who was of a decidedly practical turn of mind.

"Where are the rifles to come from?"

"Oh, there will not be any difficulty, I guess, in getting a couple at the gunsmith's in Long Branch village," Clingman remarked.

"But I presume you had better see the other party in regard to that."

"Van Huyler is quite a sportsman, I believe, and will be apt to be posted."

The counsel was good and the old Jew acted upon it at once.

In company with the Creole he sought the young New Yorker.

As Clingman had suggested, Van Huyler knew where a couple of rifles could be procured.

"As like as two peas!" he declared.

And all the preliminaries of the affair were quickly settled.

Van Huyler took it upon himself to provide the rifles and bundle them up in such a manner that no one would be apt to suspect what they were.

"We will come in Dwindlehurst's private coach, which I will tool down myself so we will not be troubled by any driver, and you had better engage a private vehicle and drive it yourself, because if there should be any serious ending to this matter, it would be ugly to have witnesses who could identify the parties."

"Very true," the Jew remarked.

"I suppose we ought to have a doctor," the New Yorker observed, reflectively.

"Allow me to offer my services," Clingman hastened to observe.

"Although at Mr. O'Gall's request I bore a hostile message to Mr. Agrippa, yet as he has thought better of the matter and concluded not to proceed further in the business I presume that ought not to operate as a bar to my offering my services.

"I am a medical man and shall be pleased to assist and as I have been mixed up in the matter I suppose I would answer far better than a stranger."

Van Huyler was favorably impressed with the offer and so confessed himself.

Although all the men who had heard of the affair—and there were few indeed of the sports who were not posted—were anxious to learn if any arrangements for a hostile meeting had been made, yet the matter was managed so well that none of the particulars leaked out.

A close watch was kept upon the principals by the knowing ones, who had made up their minds to be present at the fight, if it was possible for them to get a clew, but so well was the matter managed by Van Huyler, whose advice Mo. Edwards implicitly followed, that all of the party managed to give the watchers the slip.

Promptly as the hands of the clock pointed to the midnight hour, the principals, the seconds, the doctor, represented by Rodament Clingman, Dwindlehurst and O'Gall, who might be looked upon as the judges, made their appearance upon the beach just above the point where Shark River, cutting through the Jersey sands, pours its muddy, sluggish waters into the great Atlantic Ocean.

A glorious full moon rode high in the heavens, and its beams were so bright that all objects were almost as visible as by day.

At the time of which we write there were no houses in the immediate neighborhood of the spot which Van Huyler had selected for the dueling ground, and a better spot for an encounter of this kind could not have been found within a thousand miles of the metropolis.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE IRISHMAN IS SATISFIED.

A more lonely and desolate spot than this

Jersey beach at the witching hour of midnight could not be well imagined.

There were the low sandhills in the rear, with here and there a clump of ragged-looking cedars and scrub pines, the smooth white beach, upon which the ever-moving swells of old ocean broke restlessly, with a fitful roar, and then the broad surface of the great Atlantic, whitened here and there with a sail, so distant that it seemed more like the wing of some gigantic sea-bird than the motive power of the barks constructed by the cunning hand of man.

So desolate was the beach that it did not seem as if it was possible there was any civilization within a hundred miles.

Conners's party was the first to arrive upon the scene of action, but only a minute or so in advance of Doc Grip and his companions.

The principals bowed politely to each other and then walked apart from the rest, Conners going up the beach and Doc Grip down toward the mouth of Shark River.

Van Huyler had the rifles carefully wrapped up and so packed that they did not look at all like a pair of deadly weapons.

"Here are the tools," Van Huyler remarked, briskly, after the principals had retired and the others came together to prepare for the fight.

And as he spoke he removed the wrappers and brought the rifles to view.

"They are precisely alike as far as I can see," he continued.

"But in order that there shall not be the slightest chance for suspicion that there can be any unfairness intended on account of the weapons being furnished by us we will give you your choice of the pair."

Mo. Edwards immediately protested that as far as he was concerned there wasn't the least doubt in his mind that everything was square and above-board.

"Yes, but in all affairs of this kind we want matters so arranged that no suspicions of unfairness can arise," Van Huyler replied.

"Now choose for your man and I will take the other."

Now, neither Mo. Edwards nor O'Gall could boast of being anything of an expert as far as firearms are concerned, still they flattered themselves that they knew enough to be able to detect if there had been any material difference in the two weapons.

And then too they had faith in Van Huyler.

As a man he ranked A No. 1; and although both Mo. Edwards and O'Gall were always inclined to be suspicious—always ready to believe that men would be just as quick to do wrong as right if it was to their interest so to do, yet, rank adventurers as both of them were, and totally unscrupulous, they were willing to believe Van Huyler to be a gentleman who would not be apt to lend himself to any underhand proceeding.

"As far as I can see the rifles are just alike, and if a man made his choice in the darkness he couldn't go wrong," Mo. Edwards remarked after examining the weapons with the air of a man who knew all about such things, and who couldn't by any possibility be deceived.

"If my life depended upon the choice I would as soon choose with my eyes shut as any other way," Clingman remarked.

"To be sure: no doubt at all about it!" chimed in O'Gall, ready to back the Creole, even if he knew but little or nothing of the matter, for the old man felt grateful to Clingman for getting him out of the duel scrape into which his rage and the encouragement of the hot-headed Irishman, Conners, had carried him.

"I'll take this one," said the old Jew, placing his hand upon the weapon nearest to him.

"All right," Van Huyler replied, as he gave the rifle into the hands of Edwards, and then drew a box of cartridges from his pocket.

"These are breech-loading rifles and here are the cartridges, and if you are not familiar with the working of the weapon watch me while I load."

"Oh I guess I know all about it, although I don't think I ever happened to run across this particular rifle before," the old Jew replied with the air of a man who was well-posted on the subject.

It was true that Mo. Edwards had handled a pretty large number of weapons in his time, but it was during the early part of his career when he officiated as clerk in a pawnshop.

So he did not proceed to load his rifle until he had watched Van Huyler go through the operation.

Then it was easy enough for him to follow suit.

When the loading was completed Van Huyler spoke again.

"Now then in regard to the condition," he said. "The distance is to be fifty paces; it is our privilege to settle that point, but according to the code all else must be determined by actual agreement; I refer to the arrangements as to the giving of the signal for the firing to begin, how many shots shall be exchanged, whether the duelists are to keep their places after the first fire, if more than a single exchange of shots be decided upon, or be at liberty to advance upon each other."

"Of course it is no business of mine," O'Gall remarked as Van Huyler finished his speech,

"but I trust you will pardon me for saying that it is quite contrary to all the rules I ever heard of for the parties to advance after the first shot."

"The way I have always seen the matter arranged is that after shots are exchanged it is the challenger who has the option of saying whether there shall be any more fighting or not."

"If he is satisfied with the result of the first exchange of shots that ends the matter, but if his honor is not satisfied and he demands another shot his opponent is bound to give it to him."

"Mr. O'Gall is perfectly right in the position he takes, if I understand the code rightly," Dwindlehurst observed.

"But the rule to which he refers relates to pistols, which in his country is the common weapon; and where swords are used at the first blood the challenger has the option of declaring that he is satisfied or demanding that the fight go on."

"Correct, sir, perfectly correct," exclaimed O'Gall with a polite bow to the young millionaire.

"In this country though, where the rifle is a common weapon for settling disputes which affect a man's honor, the rule that the fight shall not stop on the first exchange of shots but that each party shall be at liberty to advance and fire until one or both are incapable of continuing the fight, is as common as the one to which Mr. O'Gall alludes."

"It is a mighty bloodthirsty way of doing business though," the old Irishman remarked with a dubious shake of the head, which plainly signified that he did not at all approve of it.

"That is it exactly," Van Huyler assented.

"And that is what we are after in this country when we indulge in little picnics of this kind."

"We don't come out to fool away our time, burn a little gunpowder and allow each man to march off the ground as unhurt as when he came upon it."

"We mean business and go in for blood."

"Well, sir, I am not anxious for any such work as that!" exclaimed O'Gall decidedly, now more than ever rejoiced that he had got out of the scrape, thanks to Clingman's not pushing the matter when acting on his behalf.

"I shall have to consult my principal and see what he thinks about the matter," Mr. Edwards remarked.

"But in regard to the signal for commencing the fight, I presume one can settle that easily enough."

"The dropping of a handkerchief is the correct thing!" exclaimed O'Gall, eager to show his knowledge.

"That is agreeable to me," Van Huyler remarked.

"Equally so to me," said the Jew.

"Will Mr. Dwindlehurst here be satisfactory to you?" questioned the New Yorker.

"Oh, yes," replied Edwards.

"The principals to be placed in position by the seconds—Mr. O'Gall will probably favor us by pacing the distance."

The Irishman bowed assent.

"Then, after a word of caution, when the seconds retire, the handkerchief to be dropped."

"Nothing wrong about that as far as I can see," Mo. Edwards observed.

"But I will see my principal in regard to the number of shots."

Then the old Jew hurried to where Conners was standing, gave him his rifle and made known to him what was wanted.

Mo. Edwards spoke in low tones but Conners's answer was heard by every one, for he purposely spoke loud.

"Curse any one-shot business!" he cried.

"I am after the life of the infernal scoundrel, and I will not be satisfied until I lay him dead in his tracks."

"We'll fire, and load and fire until one or both of us is unable to do so."

Doc Grip smiled sarcastically.

He had a suspicion that the Irishman was not an expert with the rifle, while he was one of the crack shots of the West, and this bluster was intended to shake his nerves.

Ten minutes later the duelists faced each other.

The caution was given and then the handkerchief fell.

The rifles rose to the shoulders—the keen eyes glanced along the glistening barrels and then came two reports, so near together that one seemed but the echo of the other.

There was a moment of suspense and then with a groan, the Irishman pitched forward on his face.

Doc Grip had "winged" his man.

Conners had a bullet through the fleshy part of the right arm, just below the shoulder, and it was many a long day before he recovered the use of the member.

The duel was over.

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT BEFELL JOE TRADDLES.

We must return now to the gentleman rider, Joe Traddles, whom we left, as the reader will

remember, being carried into the gloomy depths of one of the dense pine forests which are in the interior, a few miles from Long Branch.

Traddles had sunk into total insensibility, however, and therefore was in blissful unconsciousness of where he was going.

Nor did the gentleman rider recover his senses for a good eight hours, so powerful was the strength of the drug which had been administered to him by the aid of the whisky.

His senses came slowly back to him, for he did not wake to a full consciousness of what had occurred immediately.

First he stirred restlessly, then he opened his eyes and gazed around him, his brain still reeling from the effects of the drug which he had partaken of so unconsciously.

He was in total darkness.

"What is the meaning of this?" he muttered, as his brain began to work more clearly.

"What has happened, and where am I?"

Then he endeavored to remember what had occurred.

He had a clear recollection of all the events of his journey from New York from the time he started until he fell asleep.

"Hang me, if I don't feel as if I had been on a drunk for a week!" he exclaimed.

"I only took a moderate quantity of the liquor, and yet my head feels as big as a bushel-basket. What awful liquor it must have been!"

"Let me see! It must be in the middle of the night, for there isn't a bit of light visible, and the strangest part of the thing is that I don't remember going to bed at all."

"And I've turned in, too, with all my clothes on."

"I must have been on an awful spree, but I'm blessed if I can remember anything about it!"

Then Traddles rose to a sitting posture, and to his astonishment made the discovery that he was not lying on a bed, as he had supposed, but on a pile of straw.

He reached forth his hand and it came in contact with damp earth.

"Now what the deuce does this mean?" he cried, as he felt around him, anxious for further discoveries.

His idea was, that having been overcome by the liquor which he had drank, he had been taken in hand by some good Samaritans and put to bed.

Great was his astonishment now to discover that he had been reposing on a bundle of straw placed in the angle of two stone walls.

"What in the name of all that is wonderful does it mean?" he cried excitedly as he rose to his feet and commenced to feel around him so as to find out what kind of a place he was in.

There was earth under his feet, rough stone walls surrounded him; and from the peculiar camp smell he soon came to the conclusion that he was in a cellar.

Then the remembrance came to him that he carried a case of matches in his pocket, being an inveterate smoker.

"By the aid of the matches I'll soon find out what kind of a place this is!" he exclaimed as he felt for his match-case.

But to his astonishment he couldn't find it.

Thinking that he had taken out the case while under the influence of liquor, and had not been careful to put it back in the place where he usually carried it, he hunted through all his pockets.

The search was a fruitless one; the case was gone.

"Very strange," Traddles murmured, perplexed by the circumstance.

It was odd, considering that it was the only article of his personal property which seemed to be missing.

When he had discovered the case was gone, the surmise that he had been robbed immediately flashed upon him, but an inspection revealed that only the match-case was absent.

"Very strange," the gentleman rider again muttered.

He wore a valuable diamond ring on his finger, another diamond in his neck-scarf, sported a handsome gold watch and chain, and in his wallet had some fifty odd dollars.

And why any one should neglect such valuable plunder, and yet take a little trinket like his silver match-case, barely worth a dollar, was a mystery.

Traddles carefully felt his way around the apartment—this mysterious apartment—in search of a door or window, but to his astonishment nothing of the kind was to be found.

He had made the complete circle of the apartment; he knew this to be a fact by coming to the bundle of straw again.

And then, all of a sudden, a light flashed upon his puzzled brain.

"By Jove!" he cried, in a rage; "I have been hocused—that is it, hocused—by the Lord Harry!"

"Well, hang me if this don't beat all the tricks I have ever heard of, but it is as plain as a pike-staff!"

"Oh, there isn't the least doubt about it! The liquor I drank was drugged, and it is all a plan to keep me from riding in the race to-

morrow—or to-day," he added, as a sudden thought occurred to him.

"For there's no telling how long I have been in this place. I may have slept here ten or fifteen hours, for all I know."

"Some one of the rascally bookmakers is at the bottom of it, of course. Some man like that infernal Jew, Mo. Edwards, who is always game for any trick of this kind, if half the reports which are flying around about him can be believed."

"I am shut up in some cellar, that is evident enough, and as I can't find any door or window, the inference is clear that there must be a trap-door in the ceiling."

"But where is the cellar situated? Under some house, of course. Is there anybody in the house, and is there any chance for me to get out?"

"I will raise a row, anyway, and see if I can't stir some one up."

Traddles was as good as his word, for he cried out at the top of his lungs like a wild Indian.

Shouted, howled and yelled until he fairly became hoarse.

And all without the slightest avail, for no one took notice of the alarm.

At last the gentleman rider was forced to pause for sheer want of breath.

"Oh, it's no use," he gasped, in broken accents. "Either there's no one in the house, or else they are in the conspiracy, and determined not to pay any heed to my cries."

"Let me make another examination and see if I can't discover some way to get out."

By this time his eyes were getting accustomed to the darkness and his mind, freed from the fog which had been cast upon it by the potent drug which had been so insidiously administered to him was working with its accustomed clearness.

So he did not grope blindly around as in the first instance; but the second inspection produced no better result than the previous one.

"By Jove! I am in a terrible fix and no mistake!" he cried.

And then a sudden thought occurred to him.

"I wonder if the infernal scoundrels who put up this job on me intend to keep me here without food or drink until the race is run?"

"It will be outrageous! I shall be about starved."

"Already I feel the pangs of hunger gnawing at my vitals!"

"If I ever find out who played this trick on me I will be the death of the scoundrels."

"I wonder if that Clingman could have had anything to do with it."

And Traddles shook his head doubtfully as he mused on the question.

"He didn't seem to be a man who would lend himself to a job of this kind, but it was most certainly the liquor which I drank from his flask which laid me up."

"Come to think of it though, I believe he went to sleep before I did, and he drank fully as freely as I did, so if the liquor was drugged—and there isn't the least doubt that it was—he got a dose as well as myself."

"I'll find out where he got the stuff and that will settle the matter."

Just then his foot struck against a small box which was a little to one side of the center of the apartment.

"Hallo, what's this?"

Stooping he examined the article.

It was a box with a sliding cover as he soon discovered.

Removing the cover he found that within the box was a package of crackers and a bottle.

"Well, they don't intend that I shall starve to death, the miserable hounds!" Traddles exclaimed, wrathfully, not at all appeased by this discovery, for he saw now that there wasn't any mistake about the matter; he was the victim of a plot—the victim of men who had determined that he should not pilot the Son of Hercules to victory.

The bottle contained wine, as Joe Traddles had anticipated, a good article, too, and as the gentleman rider realized that he was in a trap from which there was no escaping at present, he made up his mind to make himself as comfortable as possible.

He did full justice to the crackers and wine and then stretched himself on the straw.

Long were the hours, and most wearily indeed they passed, but at last, after Traddles had disposed of the wine and crackers and was beginning to reckon that he had been fully twenty hours in the cellar, he fancied he heard a footstep overhead.

"There's somebody at last!" he cried, and then, jumping to his feet, he bawled at the top of his voice:

"Hallo, there! help! help! help!"

CHAPTER XVI.

AN EXPLANATION.

THE sound of footsteps suddenly ceased. But this Joe Traddles took to be a good sign.

The person whose footsteps he had heard, attracted by his outcries, had paused for the purpose of finding out what it meant.

This was the first thought that entered the

mind of the prisoner, and his heart gave a great bound.

But immediately on the heels of the first came a second idea, which completely banished the exultation which had seized upon him, and in its place came depressing gloom.

The footsteps were those of some man who had been placed as a jailer to see that he did not escape.

Alarmed by the outcries the man had retreated.

"Curse the luck!" fairly yelled Joe Traddles in desperation.

"Are the scoundrels going to leave me here to die like a rat in a trap?"

And then, to his great joy, he heard the sound of the footsteps again.

The man was passing rapidly across the floor above as though he had been alarmed by the cries and mystified as to their source.

"Here I am, here I am," Joe Traddles shouted as loud as he could yell.

"Down here in the cellar!"

Again there was the sound of rapid footsteps as if the man above was running around the room, anxious to find some way of getting into the underground apartment.

Then, to the great joy of the captive, a trap-door in the ceiling opened, letting a flood of light into the cellar, and in the opening appeared the face of the young Creole, Rodament Clingman.

"For heaven's sake, Clingman, get me out of this!" Joe Traddles cried.

"Is it possible, Traddles, that you are in this hole?" cried the other, evidently much astonished.

"Yes, and I have been here a deuced long time, too!"

"But how on earth did you get down? There's no steps or ladder—"

"Hang me if I know!" Traddles replied.

"In fact, I don't know what happened to me after you and I fell asleep in the Park together until I awoke in the darkness here to find myself a prisoner.

"But what does it mean?"

"Why, that I was hocused so that I shouldn't ride Dwindlehurst's horse.

"The race is over, I suppose, now?"

"Yes."

"And the Son of Hercules badly beaten, eh?"

"Oh, no, not at all!"

"What! is it possible?"

"Yes. O'Gall's filly stood no show, although she started a hot favorite, owing to your absence, which nobody could account for.

"All the 'talent' thought the mare had a sure thing of it, for they didn't take any stock in a strange rider being able to do anything with Dwindlehurst's contrary beast, but he got a man from somewhere who rode the animal to a charm, and the result was that the bookmakers are about broke.

"I dropped a good stake myself on the race through trusting to the representation of that gentle Jew, Mo. Edwards, who assured me that O'Gall's mare couldn't lose, and that it was the softest snap of the season.

"I will do the rascal the justice to say, though, that he believed what he said, for he backed his opinions with every cent he could get on, and the result was that there was weeping and wailing in the tribe of Israel after the race was over.

"But there will be time to explain all this after I get you out."

"Wait till I see if I can't find a ladder around the premises somewhere!"

"Hurry up, for I'm chilled to the bone by the damps of this cursed hole, and the chances are a hundred to one that I will get a rheumatic attack which will lay me up for a month!" Traddles shouted as the other departed.

Within five minutes Clingman was back with a small, rudely-made ladder, by means of which the disgusted Traddles escaped from the place of his captivity.

"And now, Clingman, old fellow, will you have the kindness to tell me where I am?" he asked, after ascending the ladder.

"Well, you're in a miserable old deserted house in the 'Pines,' about four miles south of Eatontown," the other replied.

"And I should never have been able to get on your track if it hadn't been for a bit of conversation that I chanced to overhear just after the match race when the 'talent' were let in so heavily on O'Gall's mare.

"It was between Mo. Edwards and a stranger, a rough, ill-looking fellow.

"I just caught a sentence as I passed them:

"I'm out a pretty penny by you and your infernal old house in the pines business!"

"That set me to thinking, and gave me a clew on which to act.

"The whisky, you know, put me to sleep in the carriage, although I didn't drink much of it. The last thing I remember was seeing you nodding in one corner of the carriage, and being conscious that I was doing likewise in the other.

"Then the next thing I knew was opening my eyes and finding it was pitch dark, and that I was fast asleep on some hay.

"While I was rubbing my eyes and wondering where on earth I was, the darkness began to

disappear, and I realized that morning was coming."

"Well, your adventure was almost as strange, although not as disagreeable as mine," Traddles remarked.

"I was in a barn a couple of miles from Eatontown, as I found when I made inquiries, but how I came there, or what had become of you, was a mystery."

"I made my way to Eatontown and inquired for you, but no one had seen you, but when I got to Monmouth Park and inquired, I was told you had written to Dwindlehurst that you would be on hand in time for the race."

"That was an infernal lie!" cried Traddles, savagely. "I never wrote a line to him. It was a forgery!"

"So I suspected after the race was over, and I overheard Mo. Edwards's remark."

"I had an idea then that there had been some foul play in the matter, and I determined to look into it."

"I took up the trail at the barn where I had been placed, and by diligent inquiry traced the carriage—the one we were in, I suspected from the description—into the pines, and then I hunted for a deserted house; was directed to this place, and that is all there is to it."

Joe Traddles was convinced at once by this candid explanation that Clingman had nothing to do with the trap into which he had fallen.

Then a sudden thought occurred to him.

"It was that infernal flask of whisky that you had!" he exclaimed.

"The liquor was drugged! Where did you get it?"

"From a party who was with Mo. Edwards and a crowd of bookmakers in the saloon where I went to get a supply."

"They wanted me to have a drink with them, and when I said I was going down to Monmouth Park with you, and had stopped in to get some liquid refreshment for use on the journey, this stranger spoke up and said that as you were a good fellow, and he had backed your mount to win a pot of money, he'd be glad to let me have his private flask."

"I tried to decline, but he wouldn't take no for an answer, so after we all had a drink, he told the barkeeper to give me his flask, and I took it."

"It was a *plant*, of course!" Joe Traddles declared, emphatically.

"Don't you see? He gave the wink to the bartender who was some fellow up to all such tricks, and while you was having your drink the liquor was dosed."

"Upon my word, it looks like it!" the young Creole declared in a tone of conviction.

"Oh, yes, not the least doubt in the world about it!" the gentleman rider declared, savagely.

"The infernal rascals got me out of the way so that O'Gall's mare would have a sure thing in the race, but as their apple-cart was upset after all, it doesn't matter much. It was the bitter bit; but I'll take the chance, if it comes, to get even with Mister Mo. Edwards and his gang, all the same, though. And I will not forget how you stuck to me, either!"

Clingman smiled and assured the gentleman rider that he highly prized his friendship.

And then the two started for Long Branch, having resolved however to keep their adventure quiet until the time came to get even with the old Jew and his confederates.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE CLUB.

THE gentleman rider had conceived a high respect for the young Creole, and when he sought the young millionaire and explained to him that he had fallen into a cunningly contrived trap-laid, as he believed, by Mo. Edwards and his gang, so that he could not reach the track in time to ride the horse—without going into the full particulars, he stated he was greatly indebted to the young Creole for assistance in getting out of the scrape in which he had become involved.

And as Dwindlehurst had been favorably impressed with the young man, this information tended to still further increase his good opinion, and so he asked him to join his party, which was about to return to the city by means of the young millionaire's steam yacht which was at anchor off Long Branch.

On the way up Clingman was introduced to Doc Grip, who formed one of the party, and from the moment that they came in contact, it was plain that each took a decided interest in the other.

Dwindlehurst, who was quite a keen observer for a man who pretended to be too lazy to observe anything, noticed that the westerner was interested in the young man and took occasion to speak to him in regard to Clingman.

"Nice young fellow—that party, Clingman, eh?" Dwindlehurst remarked with his usual lazy drawl.

"Yes," responded Doc Grip, slowly, and in an absent sort-of-way.

"I see that you have been regarding him quite attentively."

"There is something about the gentleman that perplexes me."

"Is that really so?"

"Yes, it seems to me as if I had seen him somewhere before and yet for the life of me I cannot remember the circumstances."

"That is strange, for I judge that you are a man who has a pretty good memory."

"I think I have, particularly for names and faces. It is but seldom that I fail to remember a man even after the lapse of years if I once get a good look at him; enough, you know, to photograph his image on my mind, so to speak."

"Yes, yes, I understand; although I can't boast of any ability in that line myself."

"And from the fact that I can't remember anything about this gentleman, although his face seems so familiar to me that I am almost certain I have encountered him somewhere, I am greatly puzzled."

"It is not often that such a thing occurs to you then?" Dwindlehurst remarked.

"No, not often," and all the time this conversation was going on Doc Grip was studying the young Creole in the most attentive way.

Clingman was forming one of the group of gentlemen chatting on the other side of the yacht.

"I do not wonder then that the circumstance puzzles you."

"Yes, and the only explanation I can make is that I have never really encountered this young man, but some one who looks like him—so much like him in all particulars that my memory is confused and cannot separate the real man from the counterfeit resemblance."

"I see, I see; that is extremely probable."

And then the conversation turned to another subject.

On his part, Rodament Clingman was too attentive an observer not to detect that his humble self had been the subject of conversation between the young millionaire and the stranger who had so distinguished himself on the Monmouth Park race-course.

And if Doc Grip had been puzzled to account for the familiar appearance which the young Creole presented to him, Clingman was equally unable to understand why it was that Doc Grip appeared to him like an old acquaintance, when he could not remember ever having encountered him before the time he appeared on the race track.

As soon as possible the Creole withdrew from the group of gentlemen, and strolling to the stern of the yacht, selected a position from which he could survey Doc Grip at his leisure, without that gentleman being aware that he was the object of an anxious scrutiny.

And Clingman was anxious about the matter. Doc Grip was only puzzled; the Creole was more than puzzled, and as he stood, attentively surveying the Westerner, but vailing his scrutiny so that no one would be apt to wonder at it, his thoughts found expression in words.

"What is the meaning of this?" he muttered.

"Why does the face of this man agitate me so strangely?"

"I cannot remember to have ever seen him before, and yet his face is so familiar to me that I am certain I have done so."

"And the mere fact that I am unable to place him is enough to cause me the greatest amount of anxiety."

"I am too old a player at this great game of life, too experienced to give away a single point, and when I encounter a man like this, a man whose face betrays that he can be one of the most dangerous of foes, and am unable to remember when and where I have met him, then my instinct tells me I am failing, that I am not playing the cards with my usual skill, and I must be on the lookout lest I be badly beaten."

From these remarks the reader will perceive that both the men were puzzled by their inability to remember aught of each other.

After the Creole had ceased to be the subject of conversation between Dwindlehurst and Doc Grip, the episode of the mysterious disappearance of the gentleman rider, Joe Traddles, came up.

Dwindlehurst asked Doc Grip what he thought about the matter, and the acute Westerner replied, after thinking over the subject for a moment, that, in his opinion, there wasn't the least doubt the gentleman rider had told the truth about the affair.

"Then you think he was drugged, so that my horse would not win the race?"

"Yes, that was the idea," Doc Grip replied, in his deliberate way.

"The scoundrels who got up the plot felt sure that the horse couldn't beat the mare if Traddles did not ride, and they determined not only to fix the matter so he would not be in the saddle, but also concocted the scheme not to let you know anything about it until the last moment, when it would be too late for you to secure the services of a first-class gentleman rider to take the mount."

"The plan was skillfully formed for first-class amateur riders—men well enough up in the jockey's trade to ride such a horse as the Son of Hercules to victory are few and far between."

"There isn't the least doubt about that!" the young millionaire exclaimed.

"In fact, as far as my knowledge goes, and I

am pretty well informed, I don't know three men whom I would be willing to trust with a mount which carried with it a cool hundred thousand dollars of my money."

"You see I bet a deuced sight more money than I had any intention of risking at the beginning."

"And as one false step leads to another, you know, after I had made the first plunge I kept on."

"I wasn't going to be bluffed by any set of scamps like this Mo. Edwards and his gang."

"I understand, the feeling was natural; these fellows understood it too and on it they traded."

"Of course, now that I know how deeply you had invested, I can see that it was worth the while of these schemers to go to some trouble with the idea of getting rid of Traddles."

"It was the first serious blow which has ever been struck at me," the young millionaire remarked. "And, thanks to your aid, I have parried it in the most successful manner, and I don't really know how I shall ever be able to repay the service which you have done me."

"Oh, don't mention it," responded Doc Grip, laughing at the enthusiasm displayed by the other.

"As far as I am concerned, the service I rendered was an extremely trifling one, and that it happened to be productive of such good results to you is the result of accident alone."

"Oh, well, I appreciate it all the same and shall not feel content until I can repay the debt."

When the yacht came to her anchorage, which was in the North River above Forty-second street, the young millionaire and his guests disembarked and proceeded to the Dwindlehurst mansion, which was a brown-stone palace on Fifth avenue opposite Central Park.

Dwindlehurst entertained his guests in a right royal manner, for, as he remarked, after winning such a pot of money, he could afford to throw away a little of it.

Then, when the shades of night veiled the metropolis, the young millionaire's coach was ordered out and, in company with Van Huyler and Doc Grip, Dwindlehurst set out to have a "good time" by making the rounds of the various hotels and club-houses, where both the solid men of Gotham, and the gilded youths most do congregate.

About eleven at night Dwindlehurst proposed a visit to a certain so-called club-room in Twenty-third street, devoted to the worship of the Goddess, La Belle Fortune.

Twenty minutes later they were in the palace where chance was supposed to reign supreme.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CREOLE'S BOAST.

At the close of our last chapter, we remarked that in this club-house, admission to which was carefully guarded, and over whose threshold no stranger could hope to step foot unless he had with him some one who was well known to the sable guardians who kept watch and ward at the doors, chance was supposed to reign supreme.

The men who risked their money did it under the belief that if luck smiled upon them they could realize ten times the amount they invested—ay a hundred and a thousand times the sum they risked.

This is the delusion which wrecks the hopes of men who gamble.

Even if the game is a fair one, the odds are so decidedly in favor of the men who run the game, that if luck runs at all even the "bank" must win.

But when it is remembered that old and experienced sporting men declare that hardly one "game" out of ten is run on the square, one can readily understand that the foolish mortals who expect to win a fortune without having to work for it, stand a far better chance to sink what money they put into the venture than to realize their hopes.

Dwindlehurst and his friends had no idea, though, of breaking the "bank" when they entered the portals of the gilded gaming hell.

Knowing Doc Grip to be a stranger to the great metropolis, they intended to show him the sights of Gotham.

And this club-house, admittedly the finest one by all odds in the country, was well worth seeing.

No common gambling-house, to which any one who had a few dollars to throw away could gain entrance.

Its patrons were men who stood high in the opinion of the world.

Even judges, who, upon the bench were not slow to admonish some unfortunate wretch upon the evil which came from indulging in poker at five cents ante or any low, vulgar gambling games, did not disdain to show once in a while that they did not "practice what they preached," by risking their wealth upon the turn of a card in this palatial establishment.

A costly and elaborate lunch comprising all the delicacies of the season, flanked with wines and liquors of the most costly brand was served at twelve o'clock, and among the gilded youths, who had not yet sowed their wild oats, it was considered the "proper caper" to drop into this club-house after the theater was out or the

opera over, take a bite of the lunch and a few glasses of wine, and then while away an hour at the gaming table.

And it was as Dwindlehurst remarked to his companions when he called attention to the excellence of this free lunch:

"A deuced fine spread, you know, and all that sort of thing; cost a couple of dollars a head if you got a lunch like it at D'Imonico's, while here it is to be had for the asking."

"It looks as if it was deuced cheap, you know, but as nearly as I can calculate it has cost me at least twenty-five dollars every time I have tasted it."

"You mean that you dropped that amount at the game after you got through with the lunch," Doc Grip observed.

He was a true man of the world and in his peculiar vocation had been forced to make a study of many a place of this kind.

"Yes, exactly. It seems mean, you know, to eat a man's lunch, drink his wine and then walk out without showing the color of your money at the table."

"Some fellows do though," Van Huyler remarked.

"Yes, I know it, but they are cads and not gentlemen."

"No gentleman would do a thing of that sort, you know. So you see the lunch table, with the wine and all that sort of thing, is a deuced good investment for the house."

"Oh, yes; no doubt at all about that," Doc Grip assented.

"If it wasn't, it would soon be discontinued, for these gentlemen who make a living at this sort of business are about as sharp as they make them."

Just at this moment Dwindlehurst happened to catch sight of the young Creole, Rodament Clingman, entering the room and he called the attention of his companions to the fact.

"There's the young fellow who came up with us from the Branch to-day," he remarked.

"He's going to try for wealth."

And this was the truth, for Clingman went at once to the faro-table looking neither to the right or left and bought a hundred dollars' worth of "chips."

To the reader, innocent of gamblers and their ways, be it explained that in a well-regulated gaming saloon money is never openly staked.

There is a cashier and before him are piles of ivory counters of different colors.

The colors denote the value.

For instance, a white chip is worth a dollar, blue is five and red is ten.

This is not a fixed value, of course, always the same, but changes according to the rank of the gaming-house.

In a low establishment twenty-five-cent "chips" may be bought, and in such a place a man who risks five dollars on the turn of a card is thought to be a heavy bettor, and the "bank's" limit is a hundred dollars; that is, no bet will be accepted from any one man over that amount.

In a first-class house, though, no chips are sold for less than a dollar, and few gamesters ever think of putting less than five of them on a card, and the game is generally without a limit.

That is, the "bank" is rich enough to accept bets of any amount that the individual players dare to risk, and instances are not rare when bold and desperate gamesters, encouraged by an uncommon run of good luck, have been known to risk from ten to twenty thousand on the turn of a card.

And in such a case as this, where the tide of fortune has been running against the bank, and luck favors the desperate gamester, when the card came out a "winner," the misfortune causes the "bank" to suspend, and all play for the night comes to an end.

The lucky gamester is then said to have "broken the bank."

To those who are not well informed in regard to this sort of thing it may be well to say that it is but seldom that the bank is broken; in about nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand it is the players who "go broke," and though a man may be an inveterate gamester and play for years, night after night, his chance of being struck by lightning on his way to or from the gilded den of sin is far better than that he will succeed by bold playing in causing the suspension of the bank.

When the player becomes tired of the game and wishes to stop, he takes what checks he has to the cashier, and receives cash in return for them.

As a general rule, when the gamester gets ready to stop playing, it is because he hasn't any chips left, the remorseless maw of the bank having closed upon them, and he is able to depart without troubling himself to pay a visit to the cashier.

"Well, let us pay for our lunch," suggested Dwindlehurst.

So the three approached the gaming-table, bought ten dollars' worth of chips and began to play.

Being near the young Creole they had a chance to watch his game.

He had evidently come for business, not for

the sake of passing away an idle hour, for he bet largely from the beginning.

The bank was in luck on this occasion, and Clingman's entire "stock" of chips and the three smaller piles belonging to the young millionaire and his guests disappeared at the same time.

When the "tiger"—as the presiding genius of the faro table is jocularly called—devoured the last of the chips, Clingman happened to catch sight of Dwindlehurst and the others, and at once came up to them.

"Did you ever see such an infernal run of ill-luck?" he asked, evidently greatly annoyed at his losses.

"Well, fortune does certainly seem to favor the bank to-night," Dwindlehurst replied.

"It is extremely annoying," Clingman remarked. "And then I am generally so lucky."

"Is that so?" the young millionaire observed, politely.

"Yes, whenever I want a few hundred dollars, the nearest faro bank usually supplies the funds."

There was a slight look of incredulity on the face of Dwindlehurst and his friends as he listened to this statement.

"Upon my word, you must be extremely favored by fortune then, for there are very few men who can with truth boast of such a thing."

"It is a fact, I assure you!" Clingman asserted, and the other could perceive by his manner that he thought his statement was doubted, and he was rather annoyed at it.

"I believe I am one of the luckiest men alive. Why, to give you an idea, I will say that I generally win nine times out of ten."

Now neither Dwindlehurst nor Van Huyler were greenhorns, but, on the contrary, remarkably well informed young men, who had been used to all the ins and outs of the great world, and as for Doc Grip, a better-posted observer than he would have been hard to find.

All three had watched the young man's play, and although it was evident he wasn't any novice in the game, yet his movements certainly gave no evidence that he was a particularly brilliant gamester.

Of course the young man did not say that he owed his success to his skill in playing.

He merely claimed to be extremely lucky, yet the observation of all three of the observers had tended to make them believe that lucky gamesters were as a rule, skillful ones too.

"You must be extremely lucky then," Doc Grip remarked.

"Not the least doubt of it," Dwindlehurst coincided.

"Most certainly you have reason to congratulate yourself," said Van Huyler, "for, as far as my observation goes, most gamesters are lucky if they do not lose nine times out of ten."

"Ah, I see, gentlemen, you doubt me!" Clingman exclaimed in a reproachful way, and it was plain from his manner that he felt hurt.

"Oh, no, not at all," Dwindlehurst replied, politely, and the others echoed the words.

All of them were too well-bred to wish to offend the young man.

"I can give you proof that I am extraordinarily lucky as a rule!" Clingman declared.

"If you are poker-players and dare to meet me in a game before you rise from the table, I will convince you that, no matter how skillful you may be at the game, your skill will not be able to contend with my luck."

Now as all of the three were adepts in the noble game of poker such a challenge could not be allowed to pass unheeded, and it was immediately accepted.

There were private rooms in the upper part of the house expressly arranged for the accommodation of private parties of this kind.

Ten minutes later the gamesters began to play.

CHAPTER XIX.

HIGH PLAY.

THE blood of the young Creole was evidently up, for he proposed that the ante—the original bet with which the game is begun—be fixed at a dollar, and the limit—the largest amount allowed to be staked upon a hand—at a thousand dollars.

"Must have some limit when playing with such a man as you are, Mr. Dwindlehurst," Clingman had observed, with a smile, before the game commenced.

"For, with a man of your wealth, able to draw a check for a million dollars, such a player as I am wouldn't stand any chance at all, for you could easily raise me out of my boots."

"Oh, don't be alarmed; I am not such a desperate gambler as all that," the millionaire replied.

I will not weary the reader with the dry details of the game.

Suffice it to say that, although the young Creole did not appear to possess any great genius for the game, yet he certainly seemed to be a lucky man as far as holding good cards went.

In fact, the other soon became impressed with the idea that the young man did not make

as much out of his hands as he ought to make—he did not play with the skill of a veteran.

Luck ran so much in his favor, though, that Doc Grip, whose strange and varied experience in this vale of tears had rendered extremely suspicious, was inclined to suspect the young man was handling the cards with more skill than he ought to have possessed.

To speak more plainly, he got the idea in his head that Clingman was using some of the tricks of the card-sharper—that is, he was cheating.

But the closest scrutiny on the part of Doc Grip did not enable him to detect any foul play.

At the end of the first hour Clingman was about a thousand dollars ahead.

Dwindlehurst was five hundred out, Van Huyler four hundred, and Doc Grip one hundred, he being by long odds the most skillful player in the party.

At this point in the game a card was brought up-stairs, and handed to the young millionaire.

"Percy Livingstone," said Dwindlehurst, glancing at Van Huyler.

"He says he understands that there's a little quiet game going on, and wants to know if he can't come in."

"Certainly; there isn't the least objection as far as I can see," said Van Huyler.

"Livingstone," he continued, addressing the others, "is a good fellow, comes of one of the best families in New York, and, ten years ago, when his father died, was rated to be worth a tolerably decent sum, a hundred thousand dollars at the least, but he has been a wild dog, and has been going to the bad for a long time.

"They say he has squandered every cent of his money, and has been dependent on an old uncle for some time, but he carries his head high and swaggers about with as much assurance as in the old days when his credit was A No. 1; but as it is they say there isn't any of the fashionable tradesmen, tailors, hatters, bootmakers, and the like, in whose books his name does not figure, and there's not a man of them all now who would trust him for a cent. He's a jolly good fellow, though, for all that."

"It seems to me that it would be a pity to win the money of such an ornament to society," Doc Grip remarked, with a slight touch of sarcasm.

"Oh, don't you worry about that," Van Huyler immediately exclaimed.

"The one thing in life that he can do to perfection is to play cards."

"The fellow seems to be a positive genius in that way; not that he is a regular gambler, you know, but plays merely for pastime."

"That is he used to, but at present I rather think that if it wasn't for his winnings at cards he would find it pretty hard scratching to get along, for report says his uncle is not inclined to be liberal, and barely doles enough money out to Percy to keep him from starving."

"Three hundred dollars a year I understand is his allowance," Dwindlehurst observed.

"Yes, and a nice sum of money that is for a man like Percy Livingstone to live on, a fellow who used to spend three hundred a week and think nothing of it."

"It is a wonder that such a man has not been driven to do something desperate under the circumstances," Doc Grip observed.

"Oh, no, he is too easy-going a fellow," Van Huyler replied.

"There is a great deal of the philosopher about him; he takes matters calmly, although he once told me that when the worst came to the worst, and he found all doors closed upon him, instead of making a fool of himself by committing suicide, he would join the ranks of the evil-doers and wage war upon the world which persecuted him."

"Yes, that is usually the cry of the man who hasn't anybody but himself to blame for his misfortunes," Doc Grip observed.

Further discussion was ended by the appearance of the gentleman whose merits or demerits had been in question.

Percy Livingstone was a medium-sized, rather good-looking fellow, but his face showed signs of the dissipation in which he had so freely indulged during the last ten years.

He was introduced to Doc Grip and to the young Creole and then took a seat at the table.

"I heard you were having a little quiet play up here and I made bold to ask a chance to join in the fun," he said, after seating himself.

"I always was deuced impudent, you know, one of the freshest fellows in the town, I suppose, but I will get salted one of these days."

"And, by the way, gentlemen, I am in funds to-night, so you need not be afraid that I will not be able to hold up my end of the circus."

"Whatever my faults may be, I do not gamble on credit, be it understood."

"I am in a lucky vein to-night, so I warn you to look out for me. I was in a little game at the club and came out five hundred ahead, and now my idea is to get another five hundred out of you."

The others smiled at the frank confession, and Livingstone pulled a roll of bills out of his pocket as proof that his statement was correct.

"Well, we are much obliged to you for your

caution, for now that we know what your little game is, we will be on our guard," Dwindlehurst observed.

Then the play commenced again.

It was a strange fact, but luck seemed to favor the new-comer from the first.

And then, too, it was soon apparent to Doc Grip, who always appeared to study every man he met as though he expected some day to lay a detective's hand upon his shoulder, that Livingstone was an excellent player.

In fact he played as good a game of poker as any man he had ever seen.

At the end of another hour Livingstone had not only won all the ready money that there was in the party but also held Dwindlehurst's I. O. U's, for two thousand dollars.

"There, I've had enough!" exclaimed the millionaire in disgust, as he footed up the amount of the I. O. U's, and discovered to his astonishment that besides the ready cash he had lost he was in the other's debt exactly two thousand dollars.

The others had not fared so badly for none of them had lost more than the amount of the money they had brought into the room with them.

"I stand ready to give you your revenge at any time of course," Livingstone remarked as he commenced to stow his gains away in his pockets with a deal of satisfaction visible upon his face.

"Oh, yes, of course," Dwindlehurst remarked with a grimace.

"But I am not sure that I am really longing for any more of this sort of thing.

"You play too good a game for me. In the future I think I will moderate my ambition and choose a meaner antagonist."

"Well, gentlemen, I believe I can play cards," the winner remarked in a tone which plainly betrayed how well he was satisfied with the night's work.

"But as it is about the only thing in the world I can do, I don't think that any one ought to grudge me the talent."

"Yes, but hang me! if I admire it being exercised at my expense," the millionaire retorted.

This provoked a general laugh.

Livingstone took up the I. O. U's.

"Hold on!" Dwindlehurst exclaimed.

"Don't put them away! I have my check-book in my pocket and will give you a check for the amount."

"I'm in no hurry, you know," Livingstone explained.

"Yes, but you might as well have the money now as at any time. Besides I don't wish any I. O. U's, of mine floating around."

"They would be strictly private, you know, Dwindlehurst; I wouldn't think of showing them to any one or of even speaking about the matter.

"I trust that despite my poverty and the hard lines which I have lately experienced you believe I am too much of a gentleman to do anything of that kind!" Livingstone observed with a great deal of feeling.

"Oh, certainly, of course, old fellow; I didn't mean to wound you."

Then Dwindlehurst took out his check-book and made a check for two thousand dollars, payable to Percy Livingstone, or order.

"Much obliged," said the successful player, as he took the check and surveyed it with a deal of satisfaction.

"On the First National, eh? Ah!" and the speaker heaved a sigh. "I used to bank there in happier days."

And then a sudden thought appeared to strike him, for he looked at the check with a puzzled air, and then shook his head as he raised his eyes to Dwindlehurst's face.

"See here, old fellow, I don't believe I can get this check cashed."

"Why not."

"Well, I must go to the bank and cash it myself, for I owe altogether too much money to dare to trust the bit of paper out of my hands. There are about a dozen judgments standing against me, you know, and if any one of my creditors or the hounds of the law got news of this windfall they would be down on me in a moment."

"Well, cash it at the bank."

"The bank people will not be apt to do it until they receive assurance from you that it is all right. You see I got in a snarl with them about a year ago."

"I cashed a check—in payment of a gambling debt, as this one is—and the beat crawfished next morning and tried to stop payment, saying that there was something wrong about it—hinted at forgery, you know, and got a detective after me."

"Rather than have any trouble I gave the money up, although I need not have done so if I had chosen to hold on to it."

"But I couldn't afford to have a row about the matter, for you know the old adage, 'give a dog a bad name and hang him.'

"Well, now, if I go to this same bank with a check for so large a sum as two thousand dollars, they will be certain to think there is something wrong about it."

"That is quite probable, but I can settle the matter easily enough," Dwindlehurst remarked.

"I'll write a letter to the bank folks telling them that the check is all right, and post it tonight, so it will reach them the first thing in the morning, and when you get there you will find everything all right."

"I shall be a thousand times obliged!" Livingstone exclaimed, his face brightening.

Writing materials were at hand, and in a few minutes the note was written.

Then Dwindlehurst read it aloud.

"DEAR SIR:—

"Mr. Percy Livingstone will present a check on your bank drawn by me, in the morning, which you will please honor, if there are funds in your hands belonging to me sufficient to meet it."

"That implies that I consider the check a large one, you know," Dwindlehurst observed, with a smile.

"So it will not be apt to be questioned."

"But surely your account is not drawn so low that two thousand dollars will upset it?" Livingstone queried in wonder.

"Well, it was low until yesterday, and then there was a trifle over two hundred thousand dollars deposited, the product of a sale of railroad bonds on which I got a chance to realize a good profit."

"But as the business was transacted by means of agents, the supposition might be natural that I was not certain the transaction was concluded."

"I see—I see," responded Livingstone.

The letter was directed, signed and sealed, and after leaving the gaming-house Dwindlehurst deposited it in one of the street letter-boxes.

Then the party separated.

Dwindlehurst and his companions got into their coach, which immediately proceeded in the direction of the millionaire's mansion, while Clingman and Percy Livingstone proceeded down Broadway in company.

CHAPTER XX.

MORE MYSTERY.

THE two walked on for some time in silence, Clingman seemingly buried in thought, while his companion ever and anon regarded him with a curious glance.

At last Livingstone broke the silence.

"Well, we did the trick," he said.

"Yes, the scheme worked to perfection."

"And not one of the party suspected that there was anything wrong," and Livingstone chuckled as he made the remark.

"Why should any of them suspect?" Clingman asked. "What was there about the matter to give rise to suspicion?"

"Nothing at all, old fellow, it was as clever a game as I ever saw worked."

"I am about as old, and as shy a bird, as you can find in all this big metropolis, and if I hav'n't cut my eye teeth then no man in great New York has, but I will admit that, old stager and cunning as I am, the game was worked so perfectly that if I had not been in the plot I wouldn't have suspected anything was out of the way."

"Yes, the scheme was a good one and it worked to perfection."

"And the way you dealt the cards too, particularly that last round when I caught Dwindlehurst for the big stake!" Livingstone exclaimed in a tone of intense admiration.

"How on earth did you do it?"

"Oh, I don't exactly know; it is a knack I have," the other replied, carelessly.

"I would give a good many thousand dollars if I possessed such skill!" Percy Livingstone declared.

"That is, I would give the money if I had it."

"Well put in," observed the other, quietly,

"for a man can't well give what he hasn't got."

"Your skill with cards is marvelous; I never saw a man handle the pasteboards so well before in my life."

"I ought to be proficient as I served a long apprenticeship."

"Where—in the West?—I believe they do raise some pretty keen card-sharps in that region."

"No, across the ocean—in the old world."

"Well, I have always heard it said that the workmen across the water were more thoroughly educated in their different trades than their brothers in this land of liberty," remarked Livingstone with a laugh.

"And now having seen your skill I believe it must be true, for I have never encountered a card-sharp in this country fit to hold a candle to you."

"And apart from your skill in being able to deal just what cards you pleased, and to whom you pleased, the way you managed the deal so that no one of the party would be apt to suspect there was foul play was marvelous."

"You fixed it so that my cards were just good enough to beat the rest, and that was all, and a half a dozen times it really looked as if I captured the 'pot' by the skin of my teeth, as it were."

"That is where the judgment comes in," Clingman remarked, quietly.

"But, I say, you didn't get the pickings out of the affair that you expected. You talked to me about getting twenty-five or thirty thousand dollars."

"Yes."

"For my share, you said."

"Correct."

"Well, as the total plunder only amounts to about four thousand dollars, I don't see how I am to get the enormous sum you mention out of it, or where you are going to come in at all; for I assume, you know, that you didn't go to the trouble of putting up this job just for the fun of doing it."

"You are quite right in regard to that, but the game is not ended yet; there are other moves to come."

"Of course, I understand that!" Percy Livingstone exclaimed, a little impatiently.

"There is the visit to the bank and the cashing of the check in the future; but that really amounts to nothing, for the money is as surely ours as if it was in our hands with the rest of the cash now."

"The cashing of the check will not increase the sum one penny."

"Certainly not."

"And then I didn't understand what your idea was in getting me to tell Dwindlehurst that cock-and-bull story about having trouble at the bank, so as to induce him to write me the letter, for there will not be the least trouble about my getting the check cashed, even if it was for twenty times two thousand dollars."

"I know all the people in the bank, from the president downward."

"The concern has favored me fifty times in the old days, when I had my property, and amounted to something, and they never lost a cent by doing it, either."

"You see, in spite of my wildness and the rather peculiar life I have led, I have always taken good care of my reputation."

"The sporting men know that I am something of a black sheep, and some of the young bloods around town may suspect that I am no better than I ought to be, but the financial men still rate me above par."

"Did you take care to follow to-day the instructions which I gave about the bank people?" Clingman asked, abruptly.

"Oh, yes, to the letter; although I couldn't for the life of me see what you were driving at, but as you seemed to consider the matter so important I did it."

"I contrived to see all the important bank men from the president down to the paying-teller at different intervals to-day, and confided to each one of them that I believed I was on the eve of making a great strike. Had become interested in a speculation in western lands and a certain party was going to put up a good big sum of money to run the thing, and I was to act as manager with an interest in the profits."

"But I say, if that little yarn was to smooth the way so that I wouldn't have any difficulty in cashing a two thousand dollar check, all I have to remark, and 'my language is plain,' you are taking a deuced sight of trouble for nothing."

"You will see in time," was the non-committal reply of the other.

"Where are we going now?"

"To my room where another move in the game will be played."

"All right, I'll follow you blindly, although I begin to believe that I haven't the least idea of what you are up to."

"You will understand all in due time."

When they came to Fourteenth street Clingman led the way to one of the old-fashioned houses, which in bygone days sheltered the notables of the city, but which have now been invaded by the trade demon.

There was a handsome store on the street level, another one on the first floor, and the rest of the house was occupied by small, light manufacturing concerns and offices.

Clingman had a room on the third story, a good-sized, rear apartment, scantily furnished, there being only a desk and a couple of chairs, but a large, folding Japanese screen, fully six feet wide, stood by the wall near the desk, which was a small, commonplace piece of furniture.

Upon the desk was a student-lamp, which Clingman lit after he entered the room.

In the rear of the room were two windows, but masked by heavy curtains, so that it was impossible for any one without to play the spy upon the occupants of the room.

After he entered, the Creole was careful to lock the door, and then hang a piece of cloth over the keyhole, which was a large old-fashioned one, so that no one in the entry could get a peep of what was going on in the room.

"It seems to me as if you were taking a deal of trouble for nothing," Percy Livingstone remarked as he helped himself to a chair.

"Who do you suppose would play the spy on you at such an hour as this when almost everybody in the city is in bed and sound asleep?"

The chair in which he sat was in the middle of the room a couple of yards from the desk behind which the other chair was placed.

"Small leaks sink great ships," replied the other in his quiet way.

"And many an enterprise of great pith and moment has been defeated simply because of some small precaution neglected."

"Why, you are a regular walking-stock of wisdom," Livingstone remarked with a half-sneer.

"The man who is but little above the common herd in intelligence, but who takes care to meet all possible risks, will always succeed better than the genius, who, confident in his powers, despises precaution."

"Well, I thought I was something of a philosopher, but you are away ahead of me."

Clingman made no reply to this, but proceeded to draw the screen around the desk in such a manner as to shield the desk and the chair behind it from Livingstone's inspection.

"What are you doing now?" he asked with a great deal of curiosity.

"I've got a little bit of work to do, and as I have a foolish notion about not being able to work well when any one is looking at me, I have arranged the screen so as to shield me from your inspection."

"You will have a full view of my feet, though, so you will be sure that I am at the desk, and have not vanished up the chimney, like the demon in the pantomime."

"Oh, I'm not at all afraid of that," Livingstone replied, with a laugh.

"But I must say you are deuced mysterious."

"Oh, no, not at all; it is only a whim of mine."

Then, having adjusted the screen to his satisfaction, Clingman disappeared behind it for a moment.

Livingstone heard him open a drawer, paper rustled, then he moved the lamp to suit him and came out on the other side of the screen.

"Now, let me have that check, please," he said, holding out his hand.

Livingstone stared in amazement.

"Eh, what did you say?"

"The check—Dwindlehurst's check for the two thousand dollars."

"Oh, no; I would rather hold on to that," Livingstone replied, decidedly.

"Why are you afraid of it? I can't get out of the room."

"That doesn't matter; I prefer to retain the check."

"You can't do it," Clingman replied, in the most quiet way imaginable.

CHAPTER XXI.

A MASTER-STROKE.

"I CAN'T do it!" cried Livingstone, in amazement, which was decidedly spiced with anger. "Why can't I do it—why can't I hold on to the check?"

"Because you cannot," responded Rodament Clingman, in the most mystifying manner.

"But, I say, what is the matter with you? Why are you afraid to trust me with the check?"

"We are here in the room together and with the door locked."

"I want to submit the document to a little examination, and when it is in my hands, propose to retire behind the screen and take a seat at the desk for that purpose."

"You need not be afraid of my escaping from the room. I should have to be something of a wizard to accomplish that, for with the door locked, the windows fastened, and both means of egress from the room under your eyes, it would not be possible for me to accomplish the feat unless I went up the chimney, and I could not very well do that without your knowing something about it, for, on account of the screen not reaching to the ground, you will have a full view of my feet all the time."

"Oh, that is all right! I am not at all afraid of your getting away from me, but I think I ought to hold on to the check, all the same," Livingstone replied a little impatiently.

"But see how unreasonable you are," observed the Creole in his quiet way, not betraying the least trace of excitement.

"That check is made out to you—is payable to your order and is worthless until it is indorsed by you."

"What could I do with it?"

"I don't know, I'm not good at guessing conundrums, anyway," Livingstone responded shortly.

"All I know about the matter is that I have a sort of an instinct that I ought to hold on to the check and I am going to do it."

"But see," urged the other. "As your confederate—as the man who engineered the job, and without whose aid it would not have been possible for you to have carried the thing through successfully, surely I ought to be entitled to half the spoils."

"Yes, I suppose that would only be fair," Livingstone remarked in a reluctant sort of way.

"The spoils amount to about four thousand dollars; two thousand in cash, two thousand represented by the check."

Now I don't ask you to give me half the plunder—I don't wish to touch the cash at all, but for a certain purpose—of the highest importance in connection with the game I intend to play—I ask you to allow me to examine this check which is not the slightest value to any one but yourself until your signature is on the back."

"What is the use of talking about the matter?" exclaimed Livingstone, angrily.

"I tell you that I have a sort of feeling that

it wouldn't be wise to let the check go out of my hands."

"All you say is true enough. I am not able to meet your argument, but I am not going to do what you want me to do!"

"Oh, yes, you are," Clingman responded with a quiet coolness which caused the other to stare with amazement.

"I never like to show how strong my hand is until the situation demands the display of the cards," the Creole continued.

"You are making a donkey of yourself by opposing my wishes in this matter, but as I had an idea that you might not be reasonable I took measures so that you would not be a free agent in this matter."

"The deuce you did!" growled Livingstone, who, being a rather hot-headed fellow, with a decided temper of his own, did not relish the words of the other at all.

"Yes. I determined in advance that no mere foolish whim of yours should interfere with my plans, and that is what I meant when I said that you cannot hold on to the check."

"But I will hold on to it!" Livingstone cried, angrily.

"I've got it and I will be hanged if I will give it up!"

"There is where you make a mistake—you haven't got it!"

This unexpected intelligence came upon Livingstone with the force of a thunder-clap.

He clapped his hand to the pocket where he had placed the wallet in which he had deposited the check for safe-keeping—the rest of the spoils he had stuffed loose in his pockets—and, to his astonishment, discovered that the wallet was gone. Then, with a mocking smile, Rodament Clingman raised his left hand, and lo! there was the wallet.

"Why, you infernal scoundrel!" cried Percy Livingstone in angry astonishment.

"You must have picked my pocket!"

"Exactly; that was the way the trick was worked. Don't you remember that I stumbled against you on the stairs in the darkness?"

"Yes, and nearly upset the both of us."

"That was the time the job was done."

"Oh, you're a pickpocket, then!" exclaimed Livingstone, in supreme disgust.

"Nice sort of a scoundrel you are for a gentleman like myself to be mixed up with."

"Yes, I suppose I am rather lower in the social scale in your opinion than the man who does not scruple to play the black-leg and cheat his associates at cards."

Livingstone winced at the sarcasm, but speedily recovered himself and shook his fist at the other.

"Enough of this talk! I know I'm a scoundrel, but I wouldn't be if the world hadn't trod on me. But I want that check, do you hear?"

Livingstone sprung to his feet as though he intended to advance on Clingman, and tear the wallet from his hand.

But if that was his intention, it was immediately checked, for up came the right arm of the Creole and Percy Livingstone found himself covered by a cocked revolver.

"Easy does it, my boy," warned Clingman, in the most matter-of-fact tone.

"Don't be rash—don't try any nonsense, or I shall be obliged to proceed to unpleasant extremities."

"Sit down and behave yourself like a gentleman."

Percy Livingstone felt that he had been outwitted at every point, and now, although he chafed at the tone of command employed by the other, yet he obeyed the injunction.

Resuming his seat, he exclaimed, sulkily:

"I will get even with you one of these days for this!"

"Oh, no, you will not. You will not do anything of the kind," replied Clingman, evidently not affected in the least by the sulky anger of the other.

"You are only talking nonsense, you know, when you give utterance to a speech like that."

"Why should you say that you intend to get even with me?"

"What have I ever done to you?"

"Because, with the hot-headedness of a man who jumps to a conclusion without taking time to deliberate over the matter, you have an idea of making a donkey of yourself, and I will not allow you so to do, is no reason why you should hold any grudge against me."

"Come! be sensible!"

"Who is it that has put this money in your pocket?"

Livingstone hesitated for a moment, and then growled in an aggrieved sort of way:

"Well, I suppose you did."

"You suppose I did!" exclaimed the Creole, in accents of surprise.

"Is there any doubt about the matter at all? Who proposed the scheme to you—who found the money, the sinews of war, so that you might be able to play—who 'stacked' the cards and run in 'cold deals' on the others so that you were able to win all the big stakes?"

"Oh, well, of course you worked the trick," Livingstone admitted.

"I admit I wouldn't have thought of the game if it hadn't been for you."

"And if you had thought of it would you have been able to carry it out?"

"No, of course not," Percy Livingstone replied, after a moment's pause.

"I can play cards as well as any of the regular card-sharpers, and when I buck against the ordinary club man I usually have a pretty soft snap, but when it comes to handling the pasteboards so as to be able to deal five or six hands, know what cards are in every hand and throw the winning ones to the man I wish to hold them, I will own up that I can't do anything of the kind, and until I saw you do the trick tonight I never saw the man who could, although I have heard of such things."

"But I say!" exclaimed Livingstone, abruptly, as a sudden thought came to him.

"What the deuce did you want me in this game at all for?"

"I don't see any reason for taking me in as a partner."

"Why didn't you work the trick and collar the spoils yourself?"

"I have good reasons for what I am doing," the other replied.

"As I told you I am after a big strike, and as I need your aid to work the game I am willing to let you in for a good share of the spoils."

"But be patient for a few minutes now until I examine this check."

Then the Creole retired behind the screen and sat down at the desk.

For some twenty minutes he remained there, apparently busy at something, for Percy Livingstone could hear the rustling of papers and the scratch of a pen every now and then.

The young man kept his eyes on the feet of his companion, visible under the edge of the screen and amusing himself by speculating what Clingman was doing.

"He's up to some precious bit of mischief, you can bet your life!" he muttered to himself.

The Creole rose and came from behind the screen.

"Dwindlehurst made a mistake about this check," Clingman said.

"The deuce he did!" cried the other, springing to his feet.

CHAPTER XXII.

A DESPERATE SCHEME.

PERCY LIVINGSTONE fairly turned pale at the idea that there was anything wrong about the two thousand dollar check.

"By Jove!" he cried, "I don't want to be done out of that money! I can't afford to throw away such a sum!"

"But it will be all right though," he continued, as a sudden thought occurred to him.

"Dwindlehurst is one of the squarest fellows there is in the world and if he has made any mistake he will make it right."

"He is not the kind of man to back out of an affair of this kind; he considers it a debt of honor, and, check or no check, would pay the account."

"Well, he has made quite a serious mistake in this check."

"Instead of drawing it for two thousand dollars he has made it out for two hundred thousand dollars!"

There wasn't a trace of excitement on the face of the speaker as he delivered this startling bit of intelligence.

But, to use the slang of the day, it "broke" Percy Livingstone all up.

"What's that?" he cried.

"Two hundred thousand dollars!" And he turned pale while huge drops of perspiration appeared on his forehead.

"Yes, there it is."

And removing the screen Clingman allowed the full rays of the light to shine on the check.

There wasn't any mistake about the matter.

The check called for two hundred thousand dollars, plainly and distinctly in Rudolph Dwindlehurst's large, round hand which was almost as plain as print.

Percy Livingstone understood the game now—immediately he comprehended what Clingman had been so busily engaged in doing behind the shelter of the screen.

He was evidently an expert forger in addition to his other accomplishments, and the alteration in the check had been so skillfully made that it was not at all perceptible.

Percy Livingstone was an accomplished penman, and, in his youth, had held a position in one of the down-town banks, and his experience in this line satisfied him the check would be accepted without question.

"Yes, our esteemed friend, Dwindlehurst, evidently made a mistake," Clingman remarked, in his cool, matter-of-fact way.

"He is so used to doing things on a magnificent scale that his fingers involuntarily

wrote two hundred thousand, when he intended to write simply two thousand.

"His mind was running on the subject, so the mistake was natural.

"Don't you remember that he said he had just deposited through an agent a trifl over two hundred thousand dollars in the bank?"

Again the perspiration appeared on Percy Livingstone's forehead, for he understood what the other was insinuating.

"Observe! the two hundred thousand dollars is there in the bank, deposited yesterday, as though to be in readiness to meet a heavy draft.

"You hold the check and a letter to the bank men, saying that it is all right, and to pay it, if the account is large enough to stand the draught.

"That little bit of funny business on the part of the facetious Mr. Dwindlehurst will be apt to cost him dear, for the bank people will take it seriously, and be sure to think it refers to the heavy draft for two hundred thousand dollars which you present.

"Now, my dear boy, I ask you, with your knowledge of the world, don't you believe that if you present that check you can collar the two hundred thousand dollars without the least trouble?"

While Clingman had been speaking, the active mind of Percy Livingstone had grasped the subject in all its details, and he saw with amazement with what almost super-human cunning the scheme had been concocted.

There did not seem to be a weak point in it anywhere.

Everything had been foreseen, and all provided for.

Two hundred thousand dollars!

A princely fortune, and right in his grasp!

The thought fairly made him tremble with excitement.

There was only one difficulty as far as he could see, and this he immediately proceeded to unfold to his companion.

"Oh, there isn't the least doubt in my mind that the check will be cashed without any trouble, for you have paved the way for it, so that the bank official must be possessed of more than human sagacity to suspect that there is anything crooked about the matter."

"We can collar the ducats without doubt, but then comes the rub!

"Can we get away with the plunder?

"No Canada will do for us, you know."

"All has been provided for," Clingman replied, as coolly as though he was discussing the details of an ordinary excursion.

"The bank opens for business to-morrow morning at ten o'clock—or, this morning rather, to speak correctly, for it is pretty near daylight now.

"About twenty minutes after the bank opens its doors for business you will make your appearance and present the check.

"It will be cashed.

"You will come provided with a small sachet into which to put the money. Request them to give it to you in large bills, so you can easily stow the cash away.

"Two hundred bills for a thousand each wouldn't be a very large parcel," Livingstone suggested.

"Oh, no, you could manage that all right.

"We will drive up to the bank in a *coupe*, and when you get the money, you can saunter out to the carriage, as if you were not in the least bit of a hurry, jump in, and we will drive directly to the dock of the Brazilian steamer which sails for Rio Janeiro at eleven, sharp.

"We will make the steamer about twenty minutes before she sails."

"I see, I see!" and Percy Livingstone rubbed his hands gleefully together.

"We have no extradition treaty with Brazil, and even if the bloodhounds of the law managed to discover where we have gone, it wouldn't lead to our capture."

"Exactly! that is my calculation," and Clingman smiled, knowingly.

"In the thirty minutes that elapses between the time you leave the bank with the money, and the sailing of the steamer, there is not time for the police to be called into the case, and even if the trick by any unlucky accident should happen to be discovered within ten minutes after you get the money, it would be clearly impossible for any one to get on our track until after the steamer sails."

"Not the least doubt about that!" Livingstone exclaimed in the most decided manner.

"The detectives are smart fellows and up to all sorts of tricks but they can't accomplish impossibilities, they are only human."

"You must go down to the steamer office before you go to the bank and secure two passages to Rio, and in order to baffle pursuit, give a false name and register me as your wife."

"As my wife!" Livingstone exclaimed in astonishment.

"Yes, I will disguise myself as a woman. I have a smooth, boyish-looking face with hardly a trace of a beard, and when I shave off my slight mustache, no one will be apt to detect the cheat."

"I guess you will find you have taken a mighty difficult job upon yourself," Livingstone observed with a doubtful shake of the head.

"Oh, no, I have often taken the part of a lady in amateur theatricals, and everybody always declared that the most experienced judge could not detect that I was not a woman; so, you see, I have had considerable experience in the *role* and will not be clumsy in my disguise."

While the Creole was speaking Percy Livingstone had been surveying him attentively, and, now that his attention was drawn to the matter, he saw that Clingman did possess decidedly feminine features, and he could readily understand that if he was capable of playing the *role* of a woman his personal appearance would never betray him.

"It is an immense scheme!" Livingstone declared, "and I haven't the slightest doubt that it can be successfully worked.

"But how about keeping up your disguise on board the steamer?"

"Oh, that will be easy enough. I shall pretend to be sick and keep to my state-room nearly all the time.

"But now what name will you register?"

Livingstone thought a moment.

"Let me see," he remarked at last. "Suppose I just divide my name up and call myself L. Stone?"

"Oh, yes, that will do very well," Clingman answered.

But though he asserted this with his lips, and his face gave no sign that he did not approve of the idea, yet in his mind he laughed at the folly of the other.

In this great game of life he was too old a player—had been through too many adventures—had too often escaped by the narrowest of chances from the hot pursuit of the bloodhounds of the law—not to understand that the detectives with their keen wits would immediately see through this stupid attempt at concealment.

He was a dull-brained man-hunter indeed who would not perceive that L. Stone and Livingstone were one.

And yet the average man, when he becomes a criminal and attempts to evade the clutches of the law, is always making just such stupid blunders.

As the great French detective, the famous Vidocq, once very truly said:

"Half the time it is not I, nor my satellites, who catch the criminals—it is the rogues who catch themselves."

But, although the Creole knew the idea was a stupid one, he did not attempt to induce the other to take another name.

"Now then, if you want to get a few hours' sleep, come with me to my room," Clingman remarked.

This idea appeared to be a good one to Livingstone, and he gladly accepted the invitation.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SUCCESSFUL MOVE.

THE house wherein the Creole had his apartment was on Fourth avenue, a few doors above Eighteenth street, so that the pair had only a short distance to walk.

Clingman had a large front room on the third floor, nicely furnished.

"A man is so much more comfortable, to my thinking, when he lives in this way," he explained to the other.

"I get much better accommodation than in the average hotel, and don't have to pay only about half as much."

"You see, I got into this notion during a

trip to England, and if I have to stay any length of time in a big city I never trouble a hotel."

"Yes, yes," responded Livingstone, who by this time had got the idea in his head that the Creole, for all his quiet ways, and notwithstanding that he seemed to be but little more than a boy, was a man who had seen a great deal of life.

"I have some letters to write preparatory to this rather abrupt departure," Clingman remarked. "And, possibly, you have something of the kind to attend to."

"Oh, no, there isn't a soul in the world who cares what becomes of me," Livingstone replied, with a sneer.

"I outgrew all that sort of thing long ago. The only people who will ever be apt to be anxious about my fate are my creditors, and most assuredly I am not going to write to any of those sharks to say good-by.

"Well, then, stretch yourself on the bed and take a nap.

"It is a little after four now," the Creole continued, consulting his watch, "and it will be nearly five hours before we can do anything."

"All right! I'm agreeable, for I will own up that I am about played out."

And then Livingstone, without removing any of his clothes, extended himself on the bed and in ten minutes was fast asleep.

He had told the truth about his condition for he had been up for two nights in succession, and while engaged at the card-table had seen the gray light of the dawn creep in through the cracks of the heavily curtained windows.

And he slept, "as sleeps the just," until the hands on the clock dials pointed to the hour of eight.

Then he awoke with a start, sat bolt upright and stared around him for a moment as if he was uncertain of where he was.

Clingman was not visible, but in the chair by the table where the Creole had been seated when Livingstone went to sleep, was the figure of a woman, dressed in a dark costume and with hat and cloak on, ready for the street.

The figure had its back to the bed but when Livingstone sat upright, it turned and revealed the face of Clingman, although if the other had not been prepared for the transformation it is doubtful if he would have recognized the Creole, so completely was the alteration.

Clingman's hair, curling in little crispy ringlets all over his head, was as well suited to a woman as to a man.

He had shaved himself so that there wasn't the least trace of a beard, and his face looked as fair as the face of a child.

A dark veil, attached to the hat, came over the upper part of the face, and this more than anything else helped to give the wearer a feminine look.

Then, too, the masquerader had not neglected the use of the adjuncts which are considered so necessary by the fashionable belle to her toilette.

The invaluable wash, warranted by the maker to give the skin of the old woman of sixty the appearance of that of the girl of sixteen, and the carefully prepared *rouge*, which, "if used according to directions, give the rosy bloom of health to the palest cheeks, and cannot be detected," had aided the Creole to disguise the masculine aspect.

"Well, old fellow, how is this?" he asked, as he turned and saw that Livingstone was awake.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Livingstone, in admiration.

"Capital! Upon my word, I never saw anything like it in my life. I would not have believed that such a transformation could be possible. If I had not been posted by you in regard to this scheme, I am sure I should never have suspected that it was you."

"I told you that when I acted in amateur theatricals everybody said my assumptions of female characters was wonderful."

"I can readily believe it."

"Now, then, suppose we go for some breakfast, then we can drive down to the steamer office, and when we get through with that business it will be about time to go to the bank."

"All right! I'm agreeable," and Livingstone got on his feet.

"I'll go for a *coupe*."

"No necessity for that; the *coupe* is engaged and is waiting at the door now."

"Well, I must say the way you arrange matters is superb!" Percy Livingstone exclaimed, in admiration.

"Without good generalship and due preparation battles cannot be won," the other replied.

"In the carriage, too, you will find a small black satchel."

"To put the money in?"

"Yes."

"You've got a great head, Clingman! You think of everything!"

"All the details have been carefully attended to, and now all that remains lies for you to do."

"If you have the nerve to cash the check, without betraying by your manner that there is anything wrong about it, we will surely win two hundred thousand dollars," the Creole remarked, impressively, fixing his earnest eyes full on the face of Livingstone as he spoke, as though anxious to detect whether the other could be depended upon in this emergency or not."

"Oh, don't you be alarmed about me!" exclaimed Percy Livingstone, with an air of firm determination.

"You will find that in a matter of this kind I am game to the backbone!"

"I don't boast—I am not a man given to boasting, but in an emergency like this I can be depended upon."

"Well, I hope so—I had that opinion of you, or else I should not have got you to take a part in the scheme," Clingman replied, quietly.

"But we are playing for so big a stake I was afraid that at the last minute you might lose your nerve and become rattled, you know."

"Not the least fear of it!" Livingstone asserted in the most positive manner.

"Well I hope so, but come on; first breakfast, then the steamship office, and then the bank."

The two descended to the street.

As the Creole had said, a *coupe* was waiting at the door.

A decent-looking establishment, with an old misshapen man for a driver.

"Better go to Morrelli's restaurant on Fourth avenue," Clingman suggested as the pair descended the stairs.

"We can get a private room there and at this hour we are not likely to be observed, for his guests are all late birds."

In the *coupe*, as the Creole had stated, was a small, black satchel, just the thing for the purpose for which it was designed.

The conspirators were driven to the restaurant, and then after partaking of breakfast, rode down town to the office of the Brazil steamship line, where Livingstone engaged two passages to Rio Janeiro, giving the name of L. Stone and wife.

By the time this business was transacted it was a few minutes after ten o'clock, and then the driver was instructed to proceed slowly to the First National bank.

If Livingstone had been an experienced criminal, a man accustomed to calculating the chances of escape and capture, or if he had taken time to think over the matter, he undoubtedly would have perceived that the course they were pursuing in driving around and making their preparations for flight by the aid of the *coupe* was not wise.

For when discovery came, and the *coupe*-driver was found, as undoubtedly he would be, he could immediately put the detectives on the trail.

But Livingstone's mind was so dazzled by the thought of clutching a fortune that he never stopped to think about this.

The scheme worked to a charm.

The bank people, prepared for the demand by the note which they had received from Dwindlehurst, paid the check without question.

Putting the money in the bag, Livingstone sauntered to the *coupe*.

Twenty minutes later both he and Clingman, with the precious bag, which Livingstone held on to for dear life, were on the deck of the Brazilian steamer.

And, promptly to the minute, the craft swung out into the stream, favored by an ebb tide, and about an hour later she was outside of Sandy Hook.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MILLIONAIRE IS AMAZED.

As Dwindlehurst and his guests had made "a night of it," as the saying is, none of the party rose early on the ensuing morning.

It was after nine before any of them came down-stairs, and at ten they were just sitting down to their breakfast.

The meal was proceeded with in a leisurely manner, and it was fully eleven before it was ended.

During the latter part of the repast the subject of the preceding evening's adventures came up, and the good luck which had attended both the Creole and Percy Livingstone was commented upon.

"As a rule, I usually succeed in holding my own in all such picnics," Van Huyler remarked; "but I was not lucky last night; in fact, I don't remember to have ever had such a run of ill-luck."

"Well, I can't complain so much in regard to the hands I held," Dwindlehurst observed.

"But there was one singular thing about the matter, and that was that just as sure as I got a hand that was worth betting upon, just so sure Livingstone 'stayed in,' and 'most always his cards were just a shade better than mine—just enough, you know, so as to win."

"Yes, I noticed that," Doc Grip remarked.

"It seems strange, but still the cards will run that way sometimes."

"I have always prided myself upon being one of the last men in the world to say anything out of the way," Van Huyler remarked.

"But now, in strict confidence between us three, I will say that at times last night I had suspicions that the game was not as square as it might be."

"The same thought occurred to me," Doc Grip remarked.

"But though I kept the closest kind of a watch, without appearing to do so, you know, I couldn't detect anything out of the way in the manner in which Livingstone handled the cards."

"Neither could I, and yet I have had considerable experience of gamblers and their ways," the Westerner observed.

"I know that Livingstone has had deuced hard luck for the last two or three years," the young millionaire observed, "and I have heard ugly rumors that he was more successful at play than he ought to be, according to all ordinary rules; but when I came to look into the matter, I never found any one willing to futher the reports, and so I never credited them."

"When a man gets to going down in the world everybody, you know, seems anxious to help him along."

"I feel sure that there wasn't any foul play on his part, for I noted particularly that he had better luck on other people's deals than on his own," Doc Grip observed.

"Oh, yes, I guess the game was fair enough," Dwindlehurst assented.

"But I wonder if he got his money all right? I say, gentlemen, as we havn't anything in particular to do, what do you say to a trip down to the bank?"

"I should hate to have him have any trouble about the cash, although I don't think there will be after the warning I gave by letter; yet still, it will not do any harm for me to speak about the matter."

"The money is a perfect godsend to him in his present hard-up state."

And the result of this kindness of heart on the part of the young millionaire was his discovery of the fraud which had been committed just about an hour after the money had been drawn.

Dwindlehurst was astounded.

Even to so rich a man as he the loss of two hundred thousand dollars was a heavy blow.

The bank officers were aghast at the crime, although the trick had been so cleverly performed that not the least blame could be attached to them.

Immediately all of the party fell to deliberating what was best to be done.

"He has only about an hour's start!" exclaimed the president of the bank.

"And there is hardly a doubt the police will be able to arrest him, if they are promptly notified and placed on the track."

"Of course!" Dwindlehurst cried. "But, thanks to the lucky chance of my coming down-town, he hasn't much start, and if the police are at all smart they will be sure to catch him."

"Not a doubt of it—not a doubt!" Van Huyler asserted.

Doc Grip was the only one of the three who spoke not.

In the excitement, though, this was not noticed.

Yet the opinion of the Westerner in such a matter as this was worth all the rest of them put together.

He had vast experience in such cases, but he did not venture to obtrude his opinion for it was contrary to the views of the others.

It was not his belief that a man with ability enough to plan, and courage sufficient to carry out such a gigantic scheme as this, would not provide against pursuit and capture after the prize was fairly in his hands.

True, the bold operator had undoubtedly calculated upon having a much greater start.

It was only one chance out of a thousand that the fraud would be discovered before the passing of four-and-twenty hours.

The one chance had come, though; yet still, Doc Grip did not believe so expert a rogue would allow the grass to grow under his feet until he was out of danger and safe from pursuit.

The superintendent of police happened to be at headquarters, and being a personal friend of the bank president, answered immediately that orders would be given at once to arrest the fugitive.

At the same time that the bank official telephoned to the chief of police, he summoned the Wall street detectives.

In order to afford all possible protection to the vast moneyed interests which center in the Wall street district, there is a special detective force detailed to guard that neighborhood, and their office is in close proximity to where the "bulls and bears" of the stock exchange most do congregate.

Just as the bank official finished his confab with the superintendent of police by means of the telephone, two of the detectives came hastily in.

The details of the astounding fraud were speedily given to them.

"At about half-past ten, you say," said the elder of the two detectives, a tall, dark man with a grave face, who looked far more like a clergyman than aught else.

A man whose reputation as a shrewd and brave detective officer is second to no man in that peculiar business in the land.

"Yes, it was only a little while after we began business," the president answered.

"Did he come in a *coupe*?"

"Yes, I saw the carriage as it drove away, and remarked at the time that it was a long while since Percy Livingstone had been seen driving around Wall street in a *coupe*."

"Describe him, please," said the detective.

The description was immediately given.

The detective nodded his head complacently.

"I thought so," he remarked. "I thought I saw the man."

"I happened to pass by the bank just about that time, noticed the *coupe* standing at the door, and saw a man, who answers to the description you give, come from the bank, and get into the *coupe*.

"There was a lady waiting for him in the carriage."

"A lady!" exclaimed Dwindlehurst, and the rest all appeared surprised at this intelligence.

"Yes, a good-looking young woman, well dressed, and with a sort of a foreign look."

"This is something new," the millionaire observed, "for I never knew Percy Livingstone to have any female acquaintances. He was not a ladies' man at all."

"He had a lady with him this time, sure enough, and the probabilities are that from the bank they immediately proceeded to escape from the city as speedily as possible."

"For a man smart enough to run such a job as this wouldn't do any fooling around town after the stake was secured," the detective observed.

"There was a Brazilian steamer sailed to-

day at eleven," the other detective remarked, who happened to be a regular walking guide-book, making it his business to keep track of such things.

"No extradition treaty with Brazil, you know," the first detective exclaimed.

The rest exchanged glances.

There was not a doubt in the minds of any of them that the acute detective had hit upon the truth.

"If the steamer sailed at eleven he had ample time to make it," the bank president declared, excitedly.

"And if she went out on time, as she probably did—they generally do—at this moment she must be outside of Sandy Hook, and all chance of catching the rascal is gone."

"Let us find out if the man *did* take passage by her," the detective suggested.

"Ask the Central Office to give you the agent of the Brazilian steamer."

The telephone was again called into requisition.

Communication was soon established, and in reply to the question, the agent stated that no Percy Livingstone was registered but that an L. Stone and wife took passage that morning.

The description of the man was given, and the agent at once identified it as answering to that of L. Stone.

"Is there any possible way for me to find out whether the man really sailed in the steamer this morning?" the president asked, prompted by the detective.

"Yes, he did sail; I was on the dock and saw him go on board with a lady on his arm about twenty minutes before the steamer left," the agent replied.

The bank president shook his head while a look of disgust came over his face.

"Gentlemen, I am afraid that we are beaten!" he said.

CHAPTER XXV.

A SUGGESTION FROM DOC GRIP.

ALL of the party looked in each others' faces when this intelligence was made known to them, and all shook their heads as much as to say there wasn't any hope, with the exception of Doc Grip.

The steamer was on the high seas, beyond the reach of the telegraph, and there did not seem to be any possible way to overtake the fugitive.

"I'm afraid the jig is up," the detective observed, dropping into the current slang of the day.

"He has been smart enough to get out of our reach, and there isn't any way of getting at him."

"It seems really monstrous though that the scoundrel should succeed in getting away with such a colossal booty!" the bank president declared.

"Yes, but this fellow is evidently no common rascal; it is the best planned and the best executed trick I ever heard of in all my experience," the detective declared.

"Nothing suggests itself to your mind?" said the millionaire, who did not at all relish being plundered in this wholesale way.

"No, under the circumstances I do not see what can be done," the detective replied, thoughtfully.

"The fellow has got the money, and got off, and there's no possible way, as far as I can see, to get at him."

"He is beyond the reach of the law."

"What steamer sailed to-day?" Doc Grip asked, now for the first time taking part in the conversation.

"The Dom Pedro," replied the second detective, the man of names and dates, in answer to an inquiring glance of his companion.

"Are you acquainted with the craft?" Doc Grip inquired.

"Oh, yes, I take a natural interest in such things. I used to follow the sea and am well posted about such matters," the detective replied.

"What sort of a steamer is she?"

"Iron Screw, Clyde built."

"Fast?"

"No, not particularly, built more with a view of carrying freight than passengers, for that is where the money is in that line."

"Then she is an old boat too, built before the yards were straining every nerve to get out ocean greyhounds."

"What speed can she make—fifteen—eighteen knots to the hour?"

"Oh, no, fifteen at the outside, but she will not average over twelve as a rule."

"I am well posted, as I had to make a trip to Rio in her last year. She is not fast, anyway, and then as a quick passage doesn't count, as it does in the ocean ferry to Europe, she is never driven to the extent of her speed."

The rest had listened earnestly to the conversation and from the way in which Doc Grip spoke all of them had come to the conclusion that he had some plan in his mind and was not talking at random.

"If these are the facts of the case, and this gentleman is undoubtedly well informed, I think I see a way to capture the fugitive," the listener remarked.

"By Jove! old fellow, you will put me under a heavy weight of obligations if you can!" the millionaire exclaimed.

"Your steam yacht, *The Lady of the Lake*, she is fast and able."

"I see, I see!" cried Dwindlehurst, joyously. "The *Lady of the Lake* can make eighteen knots an hour without any trouble."

"I have beaten the *Mary Powell*, the fastest boat on the Hudson from New York to Poughkeepsie—started five minutes after her and beat her by half-an-hour."

"Your idea is to give chase to the Brazilian steamer and overhaul her on the high seas."

"Exactly!" Doc Grip replied.

"It can be done!" cried the chief detective in a burst of enthusiasm.

"If she can average eighteen miles an hour, that is half as fast again as the *Dom Pedro* can go."

"Say the Brazilian steamer has four hours' start, that's only about fifty miles, allowing that she makes twelve miles an hour."

"She is fifty miles ahead when we start in chase and we gain on her at the rate of six miles an hour: twelve hours for her is a hundred and forty-four miles, eight hours for us is a hundred and forty-four miles."

"So if we get off four hours after her within twelve hours we can overtake her."

The detective's professional bloodhound-like instincts were aroused, and he was all excitement.

"One point! we must find a man to act as pilot," remarked Doc Grip, who was plainly weighing all the chances in his mind.

"I presume that like the European steamers this Brazilian craft generally follows a certain course."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed the second detective, and from his face it could plainly be seen that he too was beginning to get excited.

There's no sport in this world so calculated to cause the blood to leap lightly in the veins as a man-hunt.

"And inside of five minutes I can put my hands on a pilot who could almost follow the track that the *Dom Pedro* will take with his eyes shut."

Exclamations of joy escaped from the lips of all the party at this announcement, except the taciturn Doc Grip, and he contented himself with a smile of satisfaction.

"Captain Barnaby Joslin—a retired sailor, the oldest captain in the Brazilian line, and he used to command this very ship."

"The *Dom Pedro*?" cried Dwindlehurst.

"Yes, he sailed her for years and the man who now commands her served under him."

"Can Captain Goslin be got at speedily?" exclaimed the old bank president, all excitement.

"Yes, I can reach him within five minutes," the detective replied.

"He is interested in one of the coal companies which has an office down the street and is usually in the office from eleven to three."

"Go for him at once!" commanded the chief detective, whom by-the-way we have neglected to state was known as Captain Tom Burns, while his companion answered to the name of John Cudderly.

"And Mr. Dwindlehurst, you must come with me and get out the necessary papers so we will have due power to take our man if we succeed in overhauling the steamer."

"I don't suppose there will be any trouble about the matter?" the bank president queried.

"The officers of the steamer will not be apt to refuse to surrender the man under the claim that he is out of the jurisdiction of the United States?"

The sagacious president of the First National was noted for his caution, as this remark plainly indicated.

"Oh, no, there will not be the slightest trouble about that," Captain Burns replied.

"It's an American line, and an American ship on the high seas is just the same as American soil."

"That has always been the English rule, you know, and our law follows that of England very closely in all such matters, as is only natural, seeing that it is derived from it."

"Stay a moment," said Doc Grip, at this point. "How about the coal question?"

"Can your yacht, Mr. Dwindlehurst, carry fuel enough to last the chase and return?"

"Oh, yes," the millionaire replied, immediately. "The *Lady of the Lake* is no toy craft, you know."

"She is two hundred tons burden, and rated A No. 1."

"She carries coal enough to cross the Atlantic at the top of her speed, and by my orders her bunkers are always kept full, so she is in perfect readiness for a trip whenever the humor seizes me, with the exception of fresh meat and ice, which can be put on board in no time."

"Van Huyler, you can attend to that while I get out these papers."

"Certainly!" the other cried.

"Telephone to Ottingham, of Fulton Market, to send meat and ice enough to last a week. He will know what to send."

"Have it sent to the Battery, and then after you give the order take the carriage and board the yacht—bring her down and anchor off the Battery, and there we will get on board."

"Tell Captain Scott what we are going to do, and if he needs anything he will have time to get it, although none to spare, for it will not take us long to get everything in trim."

The rest looked in amazement as Dwindlehurst rattled off these orders, for none of them had ever seen him display so much energy before.

In fact, this bold attempt upon his fortune seemed to have made another man of the usually listless and indolent spoiled darling of society.

"By Jove! gentlemen, we'll catch the fellow, and make an example of him!" he cried in conclusion.

And then the party broke up.

Dwindlehurst and Captain Tom Burns hurried away to get the necessary legal documents.

Van Huyler, after giving his commands, through the telephone, jumped into the carriage, and was carried up-town at a rapid rate.

Cudderly hastened forth to find the veteran sea-captain, in company with Doc Grip, who was to explain what was wanted.

Captain Goslin was found, and agreed to act as pilot, saying that in his opinion there wouldn't be the least difficulty in overtaking the Brazilian steamer within twenty hours at the least.

The millionaire and the detective procured the necessary legal papers, and then hurried to the Battery, where they found Doc Grip and the old sea-captain, also the cartful of provisions from Fulton Market.

And hardly had the party gathered on the pier when the yacht made her appearance.

She let go her anchor, the pursuers got on board, and in exactly four hours to the minute from the time the *Dom Pedro* left, the *Lady of the Lake* followed in pursuit.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CHASE.

DWINDLEHURST had not exaggerated in the least when he claimed that his yacht was no toy affair but ranked A No. 1.

It was the truth.

He had given orders to the builder to get him up a yacht which would be as fine in all respects, except that of size, as any gentleman's pleasure-boat in America.

No expense was to be spared; she was to be stanch and able, a sea-boat fit to cross the Atlantic during the stormiest months of the

year, and yet fast enough to hold her own with anything whose keel cut American waters.

Of course, with such a comprehensive and unlimited order as this, it was not wonderful that the Lady of the Lake bore the reputation of being as fine a steam yacht as there was in the country.

And when that is said, it takes in the whole world, for in no foreign waters are there craft superior to those designed by the "Yankee" builders of the United States.

The veteran skipper, Captain Barnaby Goslin, who was a typical sea-dog, seemed delighted to again assume the command of a fine craft.

The captain was an odd-looking genius, being very short in stature and very stout, so, as the old expression says, he seemed about as broad as he was long.

Captain Scott, also a sea veteran, who commanded the Lady of the Lake, was a decided contrast to the other, being a red-bearded Scotchman who had earned his rank on one of the ocean lines.

As it happened, the two had sailed together in their younger days, and so were old friends.

After the Lady of the Lake got under way, Dwindlehurst, who was strangely excited over the matter—for, as a rule, he was sluggish and did not allow anything to distract him—questioned Captain Goslin in regard to what he thought of the chance of overtaking the Brazilian steamer.

"Wa-al, I dunno," replied the old man, who was a decided character, and talked more like a countryman than like one who had sailed the salt seas for fifty years.

"You have got a pesky pretty craft, and no mistake," he continued, looking around him as he spoke with a glance of admiration.

"She's a reg'lar sea-slipper, too, I reckon, slides through the water like an eel and if we don't make no mistake with our course we'll be pretty sart'in to overhaul the Dom Pedro inside of fifteen or sixteen hours; that is, if she takes her reg'lar course and I guess there ain't no doubt she will do that."

"There's no reason that I knows on why she should change her course, for when I commanded her we generally went 'bout the same all the time, but then this is an awful unsart'in world and you never kin tell what will happen."

"Jest 'cos we are arter her some notion may come into her skipper's head to go contrary to what he ginerally does."

"Mighty funny world, you know, and no mistake."

As we have stated Dwindlehurst was strangely agitated—strangely different to what he usually was, and after his conversation with the veteran which took place near the "bridge" in the bow of the boat he strolled aft and sat down by the side of Van Huyler and Doc Grip who were enjoying their cigars by the stern. The detective was at the bow.

Van Huyler took it upon himself to speak of the matter.

"I say, old chappie, what the deuce has got into you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why this affair has changed you wonderfully."

"You don't seem to be the same sort of man that you were at all."

"Of course I know that it is a good bit of money, but still even two hundred thousand dollars will not break you."

"You can stand such a loss as that a dozen times over."

"By Jove! old fellow, to tell you the honest truth, I don't know as I can," Dwindlehurst answered, soberly.

"I am worth a good bit of money, I know, but some of the investments I have only pay a low rate of interest, and some don't pay anything at all now, whatever they may do in the future."

"Then, ever since I came into the property, I have been living at a pretty fast rate."

"In fact, the interest has never supported me and every year I have cut into the principal more or less."

"But it isn't the loss of the money which worries me, for, as you justly observed, it is not going to bankrupt me."

"It is the idea then that any one should dare to play such a trick upon you?" Van Huyler observed.

"Well, no, not that exactly."

"What the deuce is it then?" exclaimed the New Yorker in astonishment while Doc Grip looked on with eyes full of attention.

"It is rather a difficult matter to explain," the millionaire remarked, lighting a cigar after supplying the others.

"But this affair, following so closely on the heels of the Monmouth Park business, has set me to thinking."

"Very laborious business," remarked Van Huyler with a shake of the head.

"I don't wonder that you seemed altered."

"That is as much as to insinuate that I never thought before, eh? Come, old fellow, I didn't think you would give it to me like that."

"But, never mind, I'll come to what I was going to say."

"When my father died and I, unexpectedly, came in for over a million—I say unexpectedly, for no one had any idea that my respected sire was worth anything like that amount, the news seemed too good to be true, and, for awhile, I lost my head and 'set the pace' in the most rapid manner."

"My father had always kept a pretty tight rein upon me, and it was a decided novelty to find myself my own master and the proprietor of a fortune, which to me at the time seemed unlimited."

"As I said 'I set the pace' and threw away as much money as any man of my acquaintance in town."

"I will do you the justice to say that I think your statement is correct as far as my knowledge goes," Van Huyler observed in the gravest possible manner.

"Now, if a man spends a couple of thousand dollars a week he will get rid of about a hundred thousand dollars a year, and I have lived at about that rate ever since I came into my property."

"But in this Monmouth Park affair if the Son of Hercules had lost I should have been put in the hole for about one hundred thousand dollars and at one whack too."

"I can thank you, Doc, for getting me out of that scrape."

Doc Grip smiled, as much as to say that it was all right.

"And now comes this second blow, which, if we do not succeed in overtaking the Brazilian steamer, will cost me two thousand dollars."

The three young men looked at each other when Dwindlehurst had finished.

Both Van Huyler and Doc Grip understood now what it was that had caused the change in the young millionaire's manner.

"You see, as we used to say at school, I'm no hog, I know when I have got enough," Dwindlehurst continued.

"And when I reflect that these two blows—these two great strokes of misfortune, which Fate has been pleased to deal me, if not parried, would take away from me about a third of my fortune, I think it is enough to make a man look thoughtful."

"The first one would certainly succeed if it had not been for you, Doc, and now again you are going to be my guardian angel, for it is extremely doubtful if any one would have thought of pursuing the steamer by means of the yacht, if you had not suggested it."

"But what makes me feel queer is that these two blows—the one following so quickly on the heels of the other—seem as if fate had taken a spite against me, and was determined to prove by direct example the truth of the old saying that 'riches takes unto itself wings.'"

"It certainly does look like it," Van Huyler remarked.

"Yes, and if from the nature of the two strokes it seems to be impossible that the blows were dealt you through human agency, it would certainly look as though some deadly foe, actuated by a sort of fiendish energy and cunning, was acting as the agent of fate," Doc Grip remarked.

"Yes, I must admit that idea occurred to me, because both these strokes were not natural ones, that is, man's cunning contrived both of them."

"Neither misfortune came through natural causes."

"If these were the days of old, dear chappie, most certainly you would be buckling on your armor about this time and seeking

the enemy who had declared a vendetta upon you," Van Huyler observed.

"Yes, and it is in such cases as this that the fortune-tellers get in their fine work," the detective remarked, who had sauntered up in time to overhear the last of the conversation.

"When a man, or woman, is the victim of one of these coincidences and goes to a fortune-teller, the party swears immediately that some secret enemy is at work, and nine times out of ten, the yarn is believed."

"But these coincidences are mighty funny things," and then the detective proceeded to relate the particulars of several curious cases which had come under his observation.

When the night came on, the speed of the yacht was reduced a little for fear of running past the Brazilian steamer in the darkness.

"We ought to get in sight of her somewhere 'round four or five in the morning," the old skipper remarked, after a careful consultation of the chart.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A CAPTURE.

THE millionaire and his party retired early for with the prospect of overhauling the Brazilian steamer the first thing in the morning it was necessary for them to be up betimes.

And they were out of their comfortable bunks too, all of them, just as the gray light of the dawn appeared in the eastern skies.

A careful watch had been kept through the night, and as it had been clear and pleasant, both of the old seadogs felt pretty certain that the yacht had not run by the Dom Pedro in the darkness.

"A big ocean steamer is a mighty thing, mon," the canny Scotchman observed.

"And when we come within five or ten miles of her we'll be apt to either see or hear her. In order to stimulate the watchfulness of the crew Doc Grip had suggested the offering of a reward of ten dollars to the man who should first catch sight or sign of the craft of which the Lady of the Lake was in chase."

The announcement had been made and, naturally, every man on the yacht was on the alert.

Immediately after rising, all of the party hurried on deck, eager to see if any signs of the Brazilian steamer had been discovered.

The two captains were pacing up and down with their powerful glasses in their hands.

But, to Dwindlehurst's anxious inquiries, they responded that as yet they had not been able to discover any evidence that the steamer was in the neighborhood.

"It's a leetle too airy yet," observed Captain Goslin, with a look to the southward in which direction the steamer was heading.

"You know we slacked speed in the night and, 'cording to my calculation, we ought not to run across her till 'bout five or six."

So Dwindlehurst ordered breakfast to be served.

After breakfast was over and none of the party loitered over the meal so great was their desire to be on hand when the chase was sighted—they came on deck.

It was a little after five by this time and both the captains were on the "bridge," spy-glass in hand, keeping a careful lookout.

"I swo' I'm puzzled!" Captain Goslin remarked, as the young men approached and stood by the side of the bridge.

"We ought to see some signs of her now, but there don't appear to be any."

Just then an old salt who had taken up his position on the "fore-truck" cried:

"Smoke three points to the lew'ard."

"Aha!" cried the two captains, in a breath, and almost every soul on deck gave utterance to a similar exclamation.

"Smoke, sure enuff!" exclaimed Captain Goslin, after he had leveled his glass at the point indicated and taken a squint through.

"And there you see is where I'm out in my reckoning, for I have bin a-looking for her to the windward, but it is a leetle likely that I have made a small mistake in my calculation."

"Do you think it is the Dom Pedro?" cried Dwindlehurst, in a fever of impatience.

"Wa-al, I dunno," replied the old mariner, in the cautious manner common to ancient salts.

"Mebbe it is, and mebbe it isn't."

"It may be some steamer coming north-ard—some of the coasting steamers, but I don't think it is likely for we are a mite too far out to run into them."

"Better crack on all the speed we can," Doc Grip suggested.

This was immediately done, and in twenty minutes' time the Lady of the Lake was rushing through the water at racing speed.

As it happened, all the conditions were favorable.

The mighty ocean was as smooth almost as a mill-pond, and there wasn't any wind to speak of.

Inside of another hour the steamer in the distance loomed up plainly.

Captain Goslin had examined her with a critical eye as soon as she rose sufficiently clear out of the dim line of the horizon for him to make her out.

All of the party waited with almost breathless anxiety while the old salt made his inspection.

At last he withdrew the glass from his eyes, closed it up in the most deliberate manner, and then, squinting in a comical manner at the anxious faces on deck below upturned to learn his decision, said:

"It's all right, boys, we've got her! It's the Dom Pedro!"

All on board had become greatly excited by this time, and the crew could not repress a shout of exultation.

"Send up a dozen of champagne, steward!" cried the millionaire, "and give the boys a drink!"

And then a council of war was held while the crew were drinking the health of the liberal master of the Lady of the Lake.

"Does this Livingstone know your yacht?" Captain Burns asked.

"No, I don't think he does; he has never seen her to my knowledge," Dwindlehurst replied.

"But he may know her by name," Van Huyler suggested.

"My idea is that it would be better not to let him suspect that we are after him, until I can get on board and nab my gentleman," the detective remarked.

"It would be just like such a desperate rascal, as this man evidently is, to toss the plunder into the sea if he thought there was a chance that he would be captured."

"So I don't want him to suspect my errand until I lay my hand on his shoulder."

"There isn't any flag flying, and if Livingstone is not familiar with the yacht, he will not be apt to suspect the truth."

"The name is on the stern," Van Huyler remarked.

"Cover it with a piece of canvas—it will only take a few minutes to do that, and then be careful too, to keep the bow of the boat to the steamer," Doc Grip remarked.

"All of us who would be apt to be recognized by the fellow, will go into the smoking-room where by drawing the curtains of the windows, we will be concealed from view, and yet be able to see all that transpires."

"That's the game!" exclaimed Captain Burns, rubbing his hands together and evidently deeply excited.

"But now the puzzle is to get the steamer to stop so I can get on board."

"Fire a gun and hoist a flag union down as a signal of distress!" exclaimed old Captain Joslin, whose nautical knowledge came in play here,

The Lady of the Lake had a small brass cannon mounted for the express purpose of saluting.

"The scheme will work! there isn't a doubt of it!" the detective declared.

Then, as the yacht was now rapidly coming up with the steamer, the Lady of the Lake going at the rate of eighteen knots, or nautical miles to the hour while the Dom Pedro was barely making twelve, Dwindlehurst, Van Huyler and Doc Grip retired to the smoking-room which was a cosey apartment on deck near the "bridge."

The gun was fired and the United States flag, union down, was run up to the mast-head.

The Lady of the Lake was now within a mile of the Brazilian steamer, and, naturally her near approach had excited the curiosity of all on board of the Dom Pedro, for the intention to signal the other had been suspected.

The captain of the Brazilian steamer was on the lookout, and when he heard the report of the gun and saw the flag run up union down, the marine signal of distress all the world over, he gave the signal to stop the engines of the Dom Pedro and soon the ocean steamer, its motion having ceased, lay like a log on the bosom of the heaving ocean.

The captain of the Brazilian craft had noticed through his glass that the strange vessel was preparing to lower a boat and so he did not get out one of his own, but waited for the message to come from the other.

The Lady of the Lake came up astern of the Dom Pedro until she was within a quarter of a mile, then her engines came to a stand-still, and she too became motionless at the mercy of the tide.

Just as her headway stopped, down went the boat into the water and in ten minutes more the detective, Captain Tom Burns stood on the deck of the Dom Pedro.

The captain advanced to meet him.

The detective's keen eyes were fixed on the passengers who had crowded to the spot and immediately he spctted his man.

"Sorry to interrupt your voyage, captain, but I represent the law just now and shall have to trouble you for one of your passengers," said the detective as the captain of the steamer approached him.

And then his hand descended on the shoulder of Percy Livingstone, by whose side he had, as if by accident, placed himself.

"You are my prisoner!"

Livingstone started and turned pale for arrest took him completely by surprise.

"What, Mr. Stone arrested!" cried the captain who had already made the acquaintance of the passengers, and been favorably impressed with him.

"Percy Livingstone, *alias* L. Stone, wanted in New York for check-raising. This gentleman raised a check from two thousand dollars to two hundred thousand dollars and got the money."

There was a start of surprise at this intelligence, while Livingstone perceiving he was trapped did not attempt to deny his guilt.

"And now having got the man I want the money. Where is the woman, captain, whom he registered as his wife?" the detective continued.

"Hang me if I know!" the bluff old sailor declared.

"She came on board with him all right, for I saw them, and I didn't see her go ashore, but she is not on board now."

"She went on shore just before the steamer started," Livingstone said in a low voice.

"We had a quarrel and she declared she would not go and went on shore again."

"Well, her absence is not material," the detective declared.

"But have the kindness to show me where the two hundred thousand dollars is?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CAUGHT AT LAST.

A GRIM look of disgust came over Percy Livingstone's face, and he shook his head in an ugly sort of way.

"I haven't got any two hundred thousand dollars," he responded.

"Oh, come; no nonsense, you know. There isn't the least bit of use for you to fool about the matter!" cried the detective, impatiently.

"I've got you dead to rights, and it will not do you any good to try any gum-game."

"Hand over the money, and you will find it will save you trouble."

"If it was to save my life I couldn't give you any money!" Livingstone asserted, in a gloomy, disgusted sort of way.

Captain Burns looked puzzled.

What did it mean?

"You got away with the money, and you know you did!" he cried angrily, for he did not relish this kind of "fooling" at all.

The man was caught—there was not a chance for him to get out of it—and what was the use of his attempting to assert that he had not the plunder?

"It doesn't make any difference whether I did or not; I haven't got it now!" Livingstone retorted.

"You haven't got it?" cried the detective, fairly aghast at this declaration.

"No, I haven't! If you don't believe it, you are welcome to search me, or my baggage, either, for that matter."

"All I have is a small hand-sachel."

Never was there a more astonished man than the detective at this disclosure.

Taking the captain to one side he asked him if, in his opinion, the prisoner had suspected the errand upon which the strange steamer came, and whether there had been any chance for him to throw the money overboard.

The captain declared in the most decided manner that there had not been the least chance for him to do anything of the kind.

Then the detective was conducted to the state-room which had been assigned to the prisoner.

All the baggage he had was a small hand-sachel, and all it contained was a few heavy towels, carefully folded.

Captain Burns was in a quandary.

Then the thought came to him that the money might be concealed somewhere in the state-room, and he suggested as much to the captain and the steward of the Dom Pedro, who had volunteered to aid him in his search.

"Possibly it is, but I don't really see where he can have put it," the captain observed, in a doubtful sort of way.

"And, begging your pardon, sir," remarked the steward, who was a shrewd, middle-aged Englishman, "I don't see where the man kept the money when he came on board of the steamer if he didn't have it in this hand-bag."

"Two hundred thousand dollars is a tidy bit of money, and even if it was all in thousand dollar bills—"

"It was!" cried the detective.

"Well, sir, it would make quite a package, and though it could be carried in the sachel, it couldn't with all these towels in it, and I'll go bail that he didn't have any bundles in his hands when he came on board, nor the lady either, for I had my eyes on both of them, and I wondered at the lady not having any bag or packages, for generally most ladies have their arms full."

"Did you see the lady go on shore?" asked Burns, who was beginning to get bewildered.

"No, sir, and I would take my oath in any court of law in the land that she didn't go on shore neither," replied the steward, positively.

Then the three proceeded to search the state-room.

Of course in such a limited space there were not many opportunities for concealment, and it did not take long for the detective to satisfy himself that the money was not concealed anywhere in the apartment.

Captain Burns was in despair.

"Hang me!" he cried. "if this is not about the toughest case I ever got hold off. The idea of chasing the fellow all this distance, nabbing him so neatly, and then not be able to get into the boodle!"

"If it ain't enough to make a deacon swear then I'm a Dutchman!"

"The woman must have taken the money with her when she left the steamer, but how she contrived to get on shore without any one seeing her, is a mystery!" the captain declared.

"For when I found she was not on board, after we started, and the gentleman said she had changed her mind at the last minute and decided not to go, I questioned all hands as to whether any one had seen her quit the boat.

"I did this for my own satisfaction, for I didn't see how she could get off the vessel without some one seeing her."

"But no one did, eh?" exclaimed the detective, anticipating the end of the statement.

"Not a one."

"I guess the fellow is telling a straight story. I guess the woman did get away with the boodle, though why he should be fool enough to let a sum like two hundred thousand dollars slip through his fingers is a mystery to me."

"After he had got it so neatly, and, apparently, got safely away with it, too, beyond the chance of recapture."

The others shook their heads.

The riddle was too deep for them to read. Then they returned to the deck.

The detective took his prisoner into the boat belonging to the yacht.

The engines of the Dom Pedro started again, and away went the ship on her journey to the Southern seas, minus one passenger, or minus two, according to the shipping list.

On board of the Lady of the Lake all were on deck to receive the detective and his prey.

"Here's my man," remarked Captain Burns, as he made his appearance on the deck of the Lady of the Lake with Percy Livingstone, "but nary boodle."

The prisoner looked downcast; and as if he was thoroughly ashamed of himself, when confronted with his former companions.

Dwindlehurst and his friends were seated at the stern of the boat, and all the crew were forward, so that the prisoner might be questioned without danger that the privacy of the examination would not be intruded upon.

"Well, Livingstone, I am sorry to see you in this condition," the millionaire remarked, a touch of pity plainly visible in his tone.

"Well, I am sorry myself, but I suppose it can't be helped now," the other replied, evidently deeply humiliated by the position in which he found himself.

"Now, what on earth ever induced you to commit such a crime, and who is this woman with whom you fled?"

"Was it for her sake that you so wantonly threw away your good name?"

And then, when Percy Livingstone hung his head as though uncertain how to answer, Dwindlehurst looked at the detective as much as to ask why he had not brought the woman on board.

Thereupon Captain Burns explained the "whole business," as he would have termed it, much to the astonishment of his hearers.

And their disgust was almost as great as his when they learned that though he had succeeded in capturing the prisoner, the vast sum of money which Percy Livingstone had stolen had not been recovered.

"It is the toughest piece of business I ever struck!" the detective exclaimed in conclusion.

"And I tell you what it is, Mr. Percy Livingstone," he continued, turning to the prisoner. "If you are wise you will make a clean breast of it and put us on the track so we can recover the money, or else it will be apt to go hard with you."

"But if you put us on the track so we can get at the boodle, we'll do all we can for you," Dwindlehurst added.

Livingstone reflected for a moment before he spoke.

He was in the toils—there wasn't the slightest doubt about it, and his common-sense told him that he stood a much better chance of escaping with a light punishment if Dwindlehurst was inclined to be merciful than if he was disposed to call for the severest penalty of the law.

"I have been a thorough-paced fool and I deserve all the punishment the law can give me, but I will do what I can to aid you to recover the money," he said at last.

And then he made a full and frank confession of how the Creole, Clingman, had induced him to enter the plot, and what had followed thereby.

But that the reader may understand it better, we will retrace our steps a little and take up the thread of our story at the point where the two in the *coupe* were hastening to board the Brazilian steamship after securing the plunder.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

THE easy manner in which the two hundred thousand dollars had been secured had filled Percy Livingstone with the intoxication of triumph.

He tossed the leather hand-bag containing the rich spoil on the floor of the carriage, between his feet, as carelessly as though it was filled with old rags instead of bank-bills worth a thousand dollars apiece.

Then he leaned back in the *coupe* and surveyed his disguised companion with a grin of exultation.

"Well, I did the trick!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, yes, very nicely, too."

"Not the least trouble in the world. Now,

if the rest of the scheme goes as well, we will be able to snap our fingers at fortune for the rest of our lives."

"Maybe so, and maybe not; it is a very uncertain world," the other observed.

Just then the carriage came to a sudden halt.

"By Jove! is that a policeman after us?" exclaimed the Creole, abruptly, darting a hasty glance out of the window on the right-hand side of the carriage.

Percy Livingstone turned deadly pale and then pressed his face earnestly against the glass of the carriage window, anxious to learn the truth.

But it was only a block of vehicles in the street, and the blue-coated metropolitan officer was engaged in making the refractory drivers attend to their business and move on.

With a sigh of relief Livingstone sunk back on his seat.

His attention had only been directed out of the window for about a minute's time, but during that brief space Clingman had succeeded in performing a little feat in the magician line which would have materially astonished Percy Livingstone if he had had any idea of it.

And it was for the purpose of getting the other to look out of the window so that he would have an opportunity to perform the trick, which he had in view, that the Creole had "rattled" Percy by calling out in regard to the policeman.

"Hang it! if you didn't startle me for a moment!" Livingstone exclaimed.

"But then I hav'n't got your wonderful nerve. You're a durned smart fellow, and I am only a greenhorn compared to you."

And as he spoke, Percy Livingstone surveyed the other in a peculiar way.

From his tone, too, a keen observer would have got the idea that he was sneering at his companion.

Their speedy arrival at the dock precluded any further conversation.

The two went on board the steamer and proceeded immediately to their state room, Livingstone taking particular care of the satchel which contained so rich a prize.

But the moment they were in the state-room, Clingman astonished his companion by commencing to strip off his womanly disguise in the most rapid manner.

He had on a full suit of men's clothes underneath, and concealed in a large pocket in the skirt of his dress was a small gray shawl, a shawl-strap, a couple of soft hats, a blonde wig and short beard of the same hue, and a thin, dark overcoat.

"What the deuce does this mean?" asked Livingstone, as the Creole, after getting rid of his disguise, spread the shawl out on the floor and proceeded to make a bundle of the things which had composed his make-up.

"Here are things to disguise us, so we can leave the steamer without any one being able to identify us," Clingman replied.

"You assume the overcoat and the blonde wig and beard, while I am so radically changed by taking off the woman's dress that it is certain no one will recognize me."

"Leave the steamer?" cried Livingstone, astounded by the suggestion.

"Yes; you don't suppose I have any idea of sailing in her, do you?"

"Of course!"

"Not at all; it is only a blind to throw pursuit off our track."

"Nonsense! There's no chance of our being caught."

"Isn't there?" cried Clingman, in contempt.

"Do you suppose the detectives are fools? Do you suppose, when the robbery is discovered, that the suspicion will not at once arise that you have fled in this steamer?"

"And when the passenger list is examined, will not L. Stone be suspected to be Livingstone at once?"

"What the deuce did you let me register in that way for, then?" cried the other, angrily.

"Because I wanted the bloodhounds to believe that we had sailed in this steamer, and while they are in chase of it, we can safely get off in another direction."

"In chase of the steamer?" Livingstone cried.

"Why, you don't believe that they will attempt to pursue this craft after she gets un-

der way, do you?" inquired Livingstone, getting nervous.

"When so large a sum as two hundred thousand dollars is at stake, men are apt to put forth extraordinary efforts," Clingman replied.

Livingstone thought over the matter for a moment, but the idea appeared absurd to him, and he rejected it.

"Nonsense!" he cried, "nothing of that kind will be done, and I will stick to the steamer!"

"But, I say about this little haul that I have made—"

"That we have made, you mean," interrupted Clingman.

"No, I don't; I think I was the one who cashed the check."

"Yes, but who arranged it so that you could cash it?"

"It doesn't matter. I've got the money; there's no mistake about that."

And as he spoke Livingstone pointed significantly at the bag which he had deposited in the corner, behind the chair on which he sat.

"Well, I am not going on the steamer!" Clingman exclaimed, decidedly.

"Well, I am, and there's no time to divide the money now."

"Will you send me my share from Brazil after you arrive?"

"How much do you want?"

"I think I ought to have half."

"Oh, no, you ought to be content with fifty thousand dollars!" Percy Livingstone exclaimed, arrogantly.

"Fifty thousand dollars is a fortune, you know."

"You are driving a hard bargain with me, but how about the two thousand dollars in cash which you won, and the five hundred dollars which I lent you, so that you were able to play?"

"Oh, well, I will be generous; you shall have the whole of that."

And Livingstone took the money from his pockets, and gave it to the other.

"Much obliged, and don't forget to send me the fifty thousand from Rio. I will write to you by the next steamer."

"All right, I will be on the lookout for your letter."

And then Clingman made a neat package of the articles, wrapped them in the shawl, and then did them up in the shawl-strap.

The warning signal, "All ashore!" sounded through the ship, and the Creole hurriedly took leave of Livingstone and departed.

After the door closed behind Clingman the other drew a long breath.

"Well, upon my word!" he exclaimed, "I really had no idea that he would take the matter so easily."

"Oh, yes, I will send him fifty thousand dollars from Rio—in a horn!"

"Oh, I'm just the kind of a man to throw fifty thousand dollars in good money away, particularly when I have it safe in my possession."

"This fellow is a smart rascal, but in this transaction I rather think I have decidedly the best of the bargain!"

In such complacent thoughts as these Percy Livingstone indulged while the steamer was getting under way.

But he did not really breathe freely until the Dom Pedro was well past Sandy Hook.

When the broad bosom of the Atlantic was reached, a feeling of relief took possession of him.

"Now, then, I can bid defiance to pursuit!" he cried.

The summons to dinner was made.

"I think I can eat a hearty meal now that the excitement is all over," he remarked, communing with himself and feeling in the most excellent spirits.

"But I must arrange some way to dispose of the money on my person; it will never do to leave such a sum as that in this state-room unguarded."

"By splitting the packages up I think I will be able to carry the wealth."

"By Jove! that was an extremely neat financial transaction though!"

"I gave twenty-five hundred dollars to secure two hundred thousand. Decidedly I ought to have gone into something where I would have had a chance to handle a great deal of money. I think the odds are great

that I would have made a wonderful name for myself.

"But here! I am losing time! I must get out the money and see how I can dispose of it."

He picked up the hand satchel and opened it, for in his excitement and hurry he had not even taken the trouble to lock the bag.

He opened the bag and then a cry of horror escaped from his lips.

All the bag contained were some coarse towels done up in packages, just about the same size as the packages of bills had been.

Percy Livingstone gazed at the appalling sight with the air of a crazy man.

Too late he comprehended the trick which had been played upon him.

When his attention had been called to the policeman, Clingman had changed the bags.

And the Creole had even got the money he had in his pockets.

He was almost penniless.

CHAPTER XXX.

DOC GRIP REMEMBERS.

PENNILESS and on his way to Brazil, a country of which he knew absolutely nothing.

This fact did not trouble him in the least when he thought he had the sum of two hundred thousand dollars at his back.

A man with such an amount of money as that will find friends, and be able to make himself comfortable almost anywhere.

But to land penniless in a strange country, where he was not acquainted with a soul, where even the language was strange to him, why the prospect made him shiver.

"Upon my soul! I am afraid I shall stand a good chance to starve!"

And with this idea in his head he had done his best to get on the right side of the captain and the passengers when he had sufficiently recovered from the heavy blow to come out and mingle with the rest.

This was the tale that Percy Livingstone related to his listeners and he wound up by saying:

"Upon my word! although I was astonished when this gentleman arrested me for I had no anticipation of any such thing, yet I can't say that I felt particularly sorry, for on the whole, I believe I would as soon come back to the United States and go to board for a while at the stone hotel up the river at Sing Sing as to run the risk of starving to death at Rio, for that is what I certainly would have stood a good chance to do if I had not succeeded in getting the captain or some of the passengers to aid me so I could return."

All of the hearers were astounded by the tale for none of them had expected any such thing.

"It seems then that you were merely a cat's paw for this bold rascal of a Creole," Dwindlehurst observed, with an extremely sober expression upon his face.

"Yes, he used me for a tool, yet I was fool enough to think, even after the display of his ability which I had witnessed, that I was able to measure wits with him," Percy Livingstone remarked, with bitter accent.

"I was a fool, of course, I was a fool all the way through, from the beginning to the end."

"I admit it, and now that I am in the trap I must pay the penalty."

"By the Everlasting Jinks!" cried Captain Burns—and when the detective indulged in this peculiar oath it showed that he was greatly excited.

"I tell you what it is, this Clingman is an out-and-outer!"

"I stand ready to lay a trifle that this affair, from beginning to end, goes ahead of anything of the kind that ever happened in this country—or at least, in my time, anyway!"

"But, thank Heaven! the boodle is in the United States, that is if the fellow hasn't taken advantage of the nearly two days' start that this affair has given him, to cut his lucky."

"The moment I strike New York though I will move heaven and earth to run him down, and if he is in the city and has not taken refuge in flight I will go bail I'll have him!"

"Well, I will do all in my power to aid you," Percy Livingstone remarked, eagerly catching at any chance to get a mitigation of

the punishment which he knew was so richly deserved.

"You can turn State's evidence," suggested the detective.

"And then if we catch this Creole—and by the Everlasting Jinks! I will catch him if he is in the country—your evidence will settle his hash and you will get off with a light sentence yourself."

"Much obliged; I will do all I can for you. I was a donkey to allow myself to be led into the scrape; but wiser men than I am have made fools of themselves before my time."

And after uttering this consoling reflection, Livingstone was conveyed to secure quarters, which the detective had previously selected for him down below.

When Captain Burns returned and announced that the prisoner was safely disposed of, Dwindlehurst put a question to him which he had been cogitating in his mind.

"I say, captain, I feel durned sorry for this unfortunate fellow," he remarked.

"He has had a pretty hard time of it for the last three or four years, and it isn't much wonder that he should have yielded to this great temptation."

"Mighty few of us would be virtuous enough to resist, under the circumstances, I am afraid."

"Now I don't really want to push the fellow to the wall. Couldn't we arrange it so we could make a landing somewhere, and let him go?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Dwindlehurst, the thing can't be done," the detective replied immediately, and with a solemn shake of the head.

"The idea does great credit to both your head and heart, Mr. Dwindlehurst, but it can't be worked. I feel just the same as you do about the matter. There isn't the least doubt that this Creole is a master rascal, and that if he hadn't tempted Livingstone in the most cunning way, and led him on with the biggest kind of a bait, the other wouldn't have been led into the scheme."

"But now that the trap is sprung, as an officer of the law, I couldn't let him go."

"It would be my ruin to do such a thing."

"Then, Mr. Dwindlehurst, you cannot afford to let him get out of the clutches of the law, for without Livingstone's evidence you couldn't convict the other fellow, even if he was caught, he has managed matters so carefully."

"You see there isn't the least bit of evidence to connect him with the affair, except what is furnished by Livingstone's confession."

This was the truth, as all the party admitted, when they fell to discussing the matter.

All that could be done now in the premises was to make all possible speed to New York, with a view to setting the machinery of the law at work to capture the Creole.

Dwindlehurst was unusually thoughtful, and during the afternoon, when he and Doc Grip chanced to find themselves together, the rest being elsewhere, they held an interesting conversation.

"I have been thinking over these matters—these two desperate strokes aimed at me," Dwindlehurst began, as he pulled at his cigar in a thoughtful sort of way.

"That is odd, for my thoughts, too, have been turned in that direction," Doc Grip replied, as he seated himself by the millionaire's side and accepted one of his cigars.

"It was a coincidence, you know we all agreed, these two strokes aimed so neatly at my fortune."

"Yes, I know we did."

"What do you think of it now?"

"I have changed my mind."

"So have I."

"I don't think there is any coincidence about it," Doc Grip observed.

"Not a bit!" exclaimed Dwindlehurst, decidedly.

"On the contrary, this Clingman originated both of the affairs, and both were designed to strip you of a good bit of money."

"Exactly—not a doubt of it," Dwindlehurst remarked.

"Thanks to your opportune arrival, the first stroke failed, and your wit pretty nearly got me out of this second difficulty; but I am afraid that the rascal has been too smart for you this time."

"Well, I don't know; that remains to be seen," Doc Grip replied, thoughtfully.

"Captain Burns seems sanguine that he can lay the fellow by the heels."

"The captain is a good fellow," Dwindlehurst observed, as he puffed away at his cigar.

"Perfectly honest and faithful, and a man with a good deal of brains, too; but if you ever came much in contact with these detectives, you must have noticed that they are an awful confident set of chaps."

"Always very mysterious about their givings-out, but always conveying the impression, mind, that they have got the wires all laid, so to speak, and when the time comes to spring the trap, it is a clear impossibility for the prey to escape."

Doc Grip laughed at the extremely correct description which the young millionaire had given of the average detective.

"Take care what you say, for your remarks are getting personal."

"How so?" asked Dwindlehurst.

"Why, I have done a little in the detective line myself."

"The deuce you say?"

"Yes, I have been quite successful in some difficult cases in the Southwest."

"And this confidence business and mystery are, to use the vulgate, two of the main stand-bys of the man-catcher."

"By his assurance that there isn't any doubt he will catch the rascal of whom he is in search, he gains the confidence of the community and often succeeds in frightening the concealed rascal into doing some foolish thing which betrays him; by his mystery, he gives the world at large an impression that he knows a great deal more than he does, and so he gets credit for more wisdom than he really possesses."

The young millionaire laughed.

"I see you know the ropes."

"Well, don't take what I have said in a personal sense, for I hadn't the least idea that you were anything in that line."

"I am deuced glad that you are in that business, for I want the aid of an experienced man, and I have the utmost faith in you."

"I want a man to look into this mysterious business, for, somehow, I've got an idea that Captain Burns will not be able to catch this Clingman, although he seems so confident in regard to the matter."

"That is my idea, too," Doc Grip observed, quietly.

"I have been calculating about the matter. The fellow will have fully fifty hours' start, and that will give him an immense advantage, if he is going to seek safety in flight, but, somehow, I have got the impression that he will not try that game."

"My idea again," remarked the other.

"It seems to me that the chances are great that Clingman was the man who dosed Joe Traddles so that my horse would lose the race."

"No doubt of it!" Doc Grip exclaimed, and then added:

"And now this scheme is all of his devising."

"Yes, undoubtedly, and the question arises, is this Creole only after what money he can make out of the affair, or is he acting as an avenger?" and the young millionaire's voice sunk as he put the question.

"Excuse me if I seem to seek to pry into your private affairs," said Doc Grip slowly, "but is there any reason why an avenger should be on your track?"

"Not on account of anything that I have done," Dwindlehurst replied.

"But I have reason to believe that my sire was not as good a man as he ought to be."

"After I came into the property I was waited upon by a miserable-looking woman who claimed to be my father's first wife—a legal wife too—but whom he had disowned and cast aside with her child."

"I was willing to do something for her, no matter whether her claim was just or not, but nothing less than one-half the fortune would satisfy her, and as my lawyers, who looked into the matter, reported that her claim hadn't a leg to rest on, nothing was done."

"The woman came in behalf of herself and a child?"

"Yes, but as the child must be older than I am it is a pretty good-sized one."

"Boy or girl?"

"I couldn't really say. I didn't inquire into the matter, for the woman was so insolent that it was almost impossible to talk to her, but as she spoke about her child being by rights the legal heir to all my father left I got the impression that it was a boy."

"Possibly this Clingman is employed by the woman or by this heir—" Doc Grip suggested.

"That is the idea that came into my mind. As I was not willing to give up the property the parties have formed a scheme to rob me of it."

"The idea seems absurd on its face, though, but still it is my impression."

"This is a strange world and many strange things happen in it." Doc Grip observed.

"Oh, by the way I have discovered who this Clingman reminds me of," he continued in an abrupt sort of way.

"Indeed, who?"

"My father," replied Doc Grip in a low tone.

"Your father?" cried Dwindlehurst in astonishment.

"Yes, my father, who was anything but a good man; it is terrible for a son to say it, but the truth must be spoken sometimes, no matter how great the pain."

Doc Grip was evidently deeply affected and the heart of the millionaire warmed to him.

"Never mind your father, old fellow, you are a perfect brick, anyhow!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE HOUSEMAID.

The Lady of the Lake made a quick run to New York and as soon as she arrived Captain Burns conveyed his prisoner on shore, and Livingstone was turned over to the proper authorities to stand trial for his crime.

The president of the bank was delighted at the success which had attended the expedition, but like the detective, he was greatly disgusted when he learned that the party had not succeeded in getting hold of the money.

"A deuced bad piece of ill-luck!" he exclaimed emphatically.

"I would have much rather that the money had been captured and the fellow escaped!" he declared.

The detective agreed with the bank official in regard to this point, but uttered the consoling remark that if a man could have everything in this world just the way he wanted it, he might consider himself remarkable lucky.

After Livingstone was safely lodged in jail the detective set all the machinery of the law in motion to discover the lurking-place of Clingman.

From Livingstone he had ascertained all that the young man knew about the Creole, which it must be admitted was not much.

Captain Burns was hoping against hope.

He professed to believe that the skillful rascal was still in the city, but when he came to commune with himself he said, emphatically:

"Not much!"

"There's not one chance out of five hundred that he will be fool enough to stay here, right under the noses of the police, when he has had plenty of time to get away."

"A good two days' start and no one to hinder."

"Two days! a man can get west of Chicago in that time, and when an expert rascal of this sort, with two hundred thousand dollars in his 'leather,' gets such a start as that, the odds are a hundred to one that he will not be nabbed."

In public though, Captain Burns professed to have the utmost confidence that the man would be caught.

Printed descriptions of the Creole, describing him as accurately as possible, were scattered broadcast throughout the United States and Canada.

The chief of police of every city and the responsible officers, of every little hamlet were notified that Rodament Clingman was "wanted" in New York and that a reward of five thousand dollars would be paid for his apprehension, and ten thousand for the recovery of the money, or a proper proportion of the ten thousand dollars for any part thereof.

Never since the great city of New York had "a local habitation and a name" had there been a criminal or crime so persistently advertised.

Doc Grip, after pondering over Livingstone's story, had suggested that the driver of the *coupe*, which had conveyed the pair to the dock of the Brazilian steamship, must be in league with Clingman, and previously warned as to the part which he was to play, or else the Creole would never have dared to leave such a sum of money as two hundred thousand dollars in a common leather satchel under the seat, and if he had not been in league with the driver, he could not have got the money again.

The detectives understood well enough how the trick had been worked.

It was the old sawdust swindler's act over again.

Livingstone had placed the bag on the floor of the carriage.

Then, when his attention was attracted to the street, Clingman pushed the bag containing the money under the seat, and substituted another bag, which he had in readiness, under *his* seat.

It was no wonder that Percy Livingstone was completely taken in and done for.

Captain Burns worked like a beaver.

Never had he put such energy into a case, and greatly disgusted was he when as day succeeded day it became apparent that he was going to have his labor for his pains.

Notwithstanding the astonishing efforts which were put forth, not the slightest trace of the missing man could be found.

Nor the *coupe*-driver, either.

Livingstone had given a description of the man who had been on the box of the *coupe*—that is, to the best of his remembrance, but he admitted that he had not taken any particular notice of him.

He was a middle-aged, brawny, big man, and had a short, gray beard, as near as Livingstone could remember.

An inspection of every driver in New York was made by the police, but although half a dozen men were discovered who answered to the description, yet when they were confronted with the young man he failed to identify them.

And after a week had elapsed without any trace of the fugitive being discovered, the detective was obliged to admit that it was pretty evident the criminal had left the city.

He had either quitted the country altogether, or else had found refuge in some remote corner of it.

"I'll keep up the search and, maybe, I will light on him when we least expect it."

And this was all the consolation that the acute detective was able to offer.

And now we will descend from the thrilling recital of the tricks and traps of the man-hunter to the commonplace account of how a new maid-servant was introduced into the Dwindlehurst mansion.

Dwindlehurst, upon coming into his property, bought a house on Fifth avenue, and set up a regular establishment.

"I'm a bachelor, I know, and bachelors don't generally have complete establishments, but as I have never known what a home was since the death of my mother, which occurred when I was a child, I am determined to go to housekeeping."

"Then, if I ever get married, I will have a home all ready for my bride to walk into."

Luckily Dwindlehurst was able to procure a butler, a sober, steady-going Scotchman, who thoroughly understood his business, and as a result, everything connected with the house ran with the smoothness of clock-work.

But where there are many servants, as there was in the Dwindlehurst mansion, quarrels are sure to occur.

The up-stairs girl had a quarrel with the waitress, who was engaged to also assist her with the work.

Mr. Stephens, the butler, thought the housemaid was to blame, and as the result of a mild remark of his to this effect, the indignant young woman said that, if it was convenient, she would like her money so she could depart.

Her wishes were complied with, and one of the morning newspapers the next day contained an advertisement to the effect that a housemaid, or up-stairs girl, was wanted at No. — Fifth avenue.

At eight o'clock that morning an applicant, who was evidently an extremely early bird, rung the bell and announced that she had come to apply for the situation.

The butler was pleased with her at the first glance.

She was a rather tall girl, with black eyes but light yellow hair worn down low over her forehead.

She had a good face and figure, and would have been called pretty, only her teeth were quite black as though they were badly decayed, and her face was slightly scarred as if at some distant date she had suffered from some disease which left traces of its presence long after it had passed away.

She had a low, soft voice, and seemed to be a modest, unassuming sort of a girl.

Her name she gave as Dulcina Howvert and said she was French by birth, but had been in this country for nearly ten years, yet still she spoke with a slight accent.

Mr. Stephens was pleased with her looks and immediately engaged her, although she stated that the two ladies whose references she had were both in Europe so that they could not be seen.

The documents though commended the girl, and from the way they were worded and the manner in which they were written the butler felt sure they were genuine articles.

The new housemaid was well received by the rest of the servants, for she apparently thoroughly understood the art of making herself agreeable, and in a week it looked as if she had bid fair to be a fixture in the house.

Mr. Stephens had watched her narrowly, and soon came to the conclusion that she was a most excellent girl.

She never had to be told to do anything twice, and moved around the house with the noiseless tread of a cat, and she was so quiet, without being reserved that she won the good opinion of the household.

"As quiet as a mouse and without a bit of mischief," was the general opinion.

But such verdicts are not always correct.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN UNPLEASANT ADVENTURE.

It was about the midnight hour and Rudolph Dwindlehurst and Doc Grip sat in the dressing-room of the millionaire, which was a cosey snuggery attached to Dwindlehurst's bedroom, enjoying a glass of wine before retiring to rest.

Just one month had elapsed since the day, when on the high seas, the fast steam yacht had overhauled the Brazilian steamer.

And during that time the young millionaire had expended five thousand dollars in hard cash in endeavoring to apprehend the cunning rascal who had succeeded in getting away with the two hundred thousand dollars.

But, as Dwindlehurst had remarked, the money might as well be thrown into the sea for all the good it did.

Nothing at all had been accomplished, excepting that some human bloodhound had been lucky enough to get a few fat fees.

"Well, I suppose I may as well give up all hope of ever seeing that two hundred thousand dollars again. I don't care for the money so much, but I would like to catch the scoundrel," Dwindlehurst remarked.

"Captain Burns still talks vaguely about the chance that Clingman may be captured at some far western point," said the other.

"But it is easy to see from the way he speaks that he has very little hope of it."

"I have been expecting that, if our theory was correct, it is about that. It looks as if the party was satisfied with the haul he has made, and had emigrated so as to be able to enjoy the spoils," Doc Grip remarked.

"But I say, I have been looking into this matter that you spoke of some time ago—this miserable wretch of a woman who claimed to be your father's first wife."

"Ah, I see, trying a little detective business?"

"Yes, through your lawyers I found out enough about her to enable me to hunt her up."

Dwindlehurst became immediately interested.

"But you will never be troubled by her again, for the woman is dead and buried."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, she was the wife of an old, misshapen man, who, in the miserable locality where they lived—up among the rag-pickers in the Harlem rocks—was known as Banty Bull.

"About three months ago the woman was taken ill and died, and, after she was buried, this Banty Bull went away and no one in the neighborhood had any idea of what became of him.

"According to the talk of the neighbors, both of the two were supposed to be worth a deal of money, the savings of a life of toil.

"But I could not find out anything about my child, and all of the people with whom I conversed declared emphatically that the couple had neither a son nor a daughter, and never did have."

"Strange! for she most decidedly spoke of her child to me when she came to see me after my father's death; that was about two years ago."

"The trail ends in amid the rocks in Shantyville, and I am at a loss to see how I can discover anything more, unless I can hunt up this Banty Bull, and I have already taken measures to that end."

"By the way, speaking of its being about time for my unknown foe to make another stroke at me," said Dwindlehurst, abruptly. "There is a weak point, right in this house which I must guard as soon as possible."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, it is one of those foolish things which men do."

"A little while after my father's death I got a chance to sell a piece of valuable downtown property, and I received five hundred thousand dollars for it.

"The property was valuable, but in the shape it was in, it produced very little interest, taxes being so high as to eat all the profits up, so I was glad to get rid of it, and it was a bother, anyway, for it was continually requiring something done to it."

"The whole sum I invested in Government bonds, and they are all there in that safe."

And Dwindlehurst pointed to a piece of furniture standing in one corner of the apartment which, to all outward seeming, was a small, antique bureau.

"Oh, is that a safe?"

"Yes, you would never think it was one, to look at it, would you?"

"They disguise such things very cleverly nowadays."

"But I say this is a terrible risky piece of business to have any such amount of valuables as that in the house, and—I trust you will pardon me for saying it—you are not wise to disclose the fact to any one."

"Don't you be alarmed; I am the only one who possesses the secret and you are the only one to whom I have ever confided it, nor am I likely to seek another confidant."

"I assure I feel honored by and appreciate the trust!" Doc Grip exclaimed, earnestly; yet still I feel that it is imprudent and I cannot help saying so. I am almost a perfect stranger to you, and it is not possible that, in this limited time, you can really have learned much of me."

"I don't know how it is, but I feel, Doc Grip, as if I had known you all my life!" the young millionaire exclaimed, impulsively, extending his hand to the other, and it was immediately clasped by Doc Grip.

"I feel honored by your friendship and I will try to deserve it!" Doc Grip exclaimed, his voice a little husky and a suspicious moisture appearing in the corner of his eyes.

"Not at all!" Dwindlehurst exclaimed; it is I who ought to feel honored by the friendship of such a man as you are, for in all that goes to make up a man you are worth a dozen of me, although the chance of fortune has chosen to make me a millionaire.

"But, by Jove! if my unknown enemy strikes me many more such blows as the last one I will not be a millionaire long."

"In regard to these bonds you are running a great risk in keeping them in the house, and if I were you I should put them in some safe deposit company immediately."

"This is the age of rascals, you know, and if some expert cracksman should happen to discover by any chance that you have such a treasure in the house, it would take a small army to keep them out."

"I will look out for them to-morrow, and

it was to ask your counsel in regard to the bonds that made me mention them to-night."

"I suppose they are registered of course and you have the numbers so you can trace them if they are stolen?"

"No, they are just the common coupon bonds, and though I believe I *did* have the numbers once, I will be hanged if I know where they are now!"

"Well, of all the careless men!" exclaimed Doc Grip.

"Why, with such bonds, it would be no trouble at all for any rascal to get rid of them! Decidedly, you must put them in a safe place the first thing in the morning."

"I will, for do you know, I really begin to get a little nervous, for these blows in the dark are not apt to make a man feel cheerful."

Then they finished the wine, and each sought his own apartment.

Dwindlehurst's sleeping-apartment was a front chamber on the second floor of the house, and this room, in which the conversation we have just related took place, also fronted on the street, being what is usually used as a hall bedroom.

Doc Grip had a handsome apartment on the same floor, but in the rear of the building.

After attending Doc Grip to the door of the snugger and bidding him good-night, Dwindlehurst took the precaution to turn the key in the lock.

Entering his own room, he turned up the gas, removed his coat and vest, and then a sudden idea occurred to him.

"By Jove! I wonder if those bonds *are* all right!" he exclaimed.

"I am really getting nervous—just like an old woman, you know!"

"Of course the idea is perfectly ridiculous, but I'll take a look at them just to satisfy myself, anyway."

"And, in the morning, off they will go to a safe place."

Acting immediately on this idea, Dwindlehurst strode into the dressing-room, lit the gas which he had extinguished, and then proceeded to examine the safe.

It was only a dummy bureau, just a cover to hide the safe which was within it, for upon pressing a secret spring in the side of the piece, the center front swung out, revealing the door of the safe.

Dropping upon one knee, Dwindlehurst took hold of the knob and turned it until the proper combination came, then the door swung open.

The eyes of the millionaire at once fell upon the bonds, all snug in their place.

"What a donkey I was to allow this feeling of apprehension to come over me!" he exclaimed.

"How the world would laugh if it was known that I, a full-grown man, was weak enough to yield to a stupid feeling of this kind!"

"Oh, I am getting nervous! There isn't the least doubt about it, and I must get the doctor to prescribe a soothing draught for me."

"Ah!"

The exclamation escaped from his lips in a long-drawn sigh of apprehension, for to his now heated imagination the impression came that there was some one in the room besides himself.

He fancied he heard a suppressed breathing.

For a moment his own breath seemed to stop.

Then, before he could spring to his feet as he intended, there was a whirr in the air, and, with a groan, the young millionaire fell forward against the safe, insensible.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE ROBBERY.

WHEN Dwindlehurst recovered his senses, he found that he was lying on his back in front of the safe.

As soon as he was able he rose to a sitting posture, but it was some minutes before he was able to get upon his feet, for the blow which he received had been a heavy one.

He felt dazed and faint, and it was fully ten minutes before his mind worked as clearly as usual.

And even when he was in full possession

of his senses, he was not able to clearly understand what had befallen him.

His first idea was that he had been assaulted by some one who had stealthily approached him from the rear, and with a single heavy blow stretched him senseless upon the floor.

Yet severe as was the shock—his head ached even now from the blow—the skin was not broken, and no blood came.

"Can it be possible that something was wrong with my head, and that I had a stroke like apoplexy?" he queried.

"It does not seem possible that I could be assaulted right here in my own house and in my private apartments too."

"And for what object?"

Thoughts of the valuable bonds in the safe flashed at once into his mind.

"Surely no thief in pursuit of plunder would be able to get into this room!" he exclaimed.

The idea seemed to be absurd, yet a moment later when he examined the safe he discovered that not a single bond remained in the custody of the iron treasure-house.

For a few moments the young millionaire was like a man stunned by a heavy blow.

He stared at the empty apartment in the safe, in which the bonds had been placed, as though unable to believe the evidence of his eyes.

"By Heaven this is most wonderful!" he exclaimed at last, when he had recovered the use of his tongue.

"This is the most daring outrage I have ever heard of, but the scoundrel who perpetrated it cannot be far off and I may be able to apprehend him and in such a case as this Doc Grip's advice will be valuable."

Although he had only known our hero for a short time yet he had come to regard him as one of the wisest of counselors.

And having come to the conclusion not to take any steps without consulting his guest, Dwindlehurst made haste to call him from his slumbers in order to inform him of the outrage which had been committed.

Doc Grip was a light sleeper and it was little trouble to awaken him.

His astonishment was great when he understood what had taken place.

"Upon my word! this is the boldest operation of the kind that I ever heard of in all my experience!" he exclaimed, as he hurried on his clothes.

"The scoundrel has so short a start though that we ought to be able to overtake him," he continued.

"Yes, I should Judge that he has hardly had time to get out of the house."

"Hadn't I better telephone immediately for the police?"

"Certainly by all means, and the quicker the better!"

It did not take Doc Grip long to dress, then the pair hurried to the telephone and were soon in communication with the police authorities.

"Better keep quiet and take no steps until our men are on the spot," was the advice received from the Central Office.

"Certainly, I will be guided in the matter by your counsel," was the reply.

"Meet the detectives at the door and admit them into the house quietly and, if possible, without letting any of your servants know that they are in the mansion."

"I will attend to it in person," Dwindlehurst answered.

This closed the interview.

"I fancy that this gentleman has formed the same opinion as myself," Doc Grip remarked, "judging from the cautions which he has given."

"I suppose I am somewhat dull of comprehension," Dwindlehurst observed, "but as this affair is altogether out of my line I presume I ought not to expect to jump quickly to conclusions for I must admit I am unable to perceive from anything he said that he had formed an opinion in the matter at all."

"Every man to his trade, you know," Doc Grip remarked with a smile.

"It is not expected that a gentleman like yourself should be an adept at thief-catching."

"I gather from this detective's caution not to allow any of the servants to know aught of this business that he suspects the job has been worked from the inside."

"That is, that the thief who got away

with the bonds is either one of your own servants, or some professional cracksman admitted into the house by one of the menials."

"Yes, yes, I see now!" Dwindlehurst exclaimed.

"After your explanations it is perfectly clear to me. And do you also hold to that opinion?"

"I do indeed!" Doc Grip replied, decidedly. "To my mind it seems almost an impossibility that the job could have been done by any outsider, who was perfectly familiar with all the interior arrangements."

"It is an old trick, you see, with the professional burglars, who work with their brains as well as their hands, to get some one of their pals into the house on which they design to operate, so that the 'crib' can be 'cracked' without any trouble."

"Generally the party who does the inside work is a woman."

"I see, and of course being well acquainted with all the arrangements of the house, the inside worker is able to smooth the way so that the man who does the stealing has a tolerably easy job."

"Yes, that is the idea."

Dwindlehurst was busy in thought for a few moments.

"Well, I am not much of a detective, of course, so it is only natural I should not be good at guessing," the young millionaire observed at last. "But as far as I can see, there isn't a servant in the house whom I would be inclined to suspect."

"You would be a very acute detective, indeed, if you were able to pick out the right one in such a case as this," Doc Grip remarked.

"You must understand that, no matter how great a man's experience may be in the detective line, it does not give him any such power as that."

"My dear fellow, I am really such a greenhorn in regard to all such matters that my ignorance is not to be wondered at, but I confess I had a sort of an idea that all the acute detective had to do in a case of this kind was to examine the parties and he would be able to make a shrewd guess at the guilty one."

"Of course, long years of professional training sometimes give a man a sort of instinct in such matters, and he is able to make a good guess at the truth, without having a bit of proof to aid him, and then again, if the culprit happens to be an old offender the experienced detective may have met the party before, and so be able to recognize the aforesaid."

"In a case of this kind, though, such a thing is not likely, for the cracksman who planned and executed so big a job must be a first-class man in every respect and would never make the mistake of using as a stoolie pigeon any one who would be apt to be easily recognized."

"Certainly not!" Dwindlehurst assented.

"That would be the biggest kind of a blunder."

"Say nothing to the detectives about my ever having any experience in the man-catching line, and we will watch their maneuvers; then, after they are gone, I will give my ideas in regard to the matter."

"By Jove! Doc, I have so much confidence in your ability that I would be willing to back you for a large amount against a dozen of the best of them!" the young millionaire declared.

Doc Grip laughed, and remarked that the other was inclined to be prejudiced in his favor; then the pair adjourned to the front door, there to await the arrival of the thief-takers.

They had not many minutes to wait, but during the interval Dwindlehurst took occasion to refer to the violent blow on the head which he had received and to express his surprise that no outward marks of the blow were visible, although the pain still remained.

Then Doc Grip explained that the stroke had probably been given with a "sand-club"—a weapon borrowed from the ruffians of the Orient—the "far East"—and which is merely a canvas bag filled with sand, more like a huge sausage than aught else, and a blow from it when wielded by an experienced hand generally stuns without leaving any tell-tale marks.

"Oh, yes, now you speak of it, I remem-

ber to have read about such a weapon; but I never thought of it in connection with my own case," the young millionaire remarked, when the other had finished his explanation.

"But, I say," he continued, "you have undoubtedly formed a theory in regard to how this job was done."

"Yes."

"Well, let me hear your ideas on the subject, and then, when the detectives come, it will be interesting for me to note how nearly their views agree with yours."

"Certainly. My theory is that the robbery was committed by some cool, determined fellow, evidently an old and experienced hand, who managed to gain entrance to the house through the agency of some one on the inside."

"I don't think there is the least doubt in regard to that, for the house is so well protected by burglar alarms that it would be impossible for the most expert cracksman to force an entrance without giving an alarm."

"In some way the man learned, or suspected that your safe contained valuables—"

"He couldn't have known that the bonds were in it!" Dwindlehurst exclaimed at this point, interrupting Doc Grip.

"For I have never said a single word to any one about it, yourself excepted."

"If you make that statement to the detectives the odds are about a thousand to one that they will immediately jump to the conclusion that I am the man who did the trick," Doc Grip observed with a smile.

"Of course you mean that for a joke, but I shouldn't be at all surprised if they were to make some such stupid blunder."

"I don't know much about detectives but from what I have read of them I should judge that they do just such idiotic things sometimes."

"They are only human, of course, and blunder once in a while."

"But to get back to my subject."

"The cracksman suspected that your safe held valuables and having secured an entrance into the house, concealed himself in some convenient place intending to 'crack' the safe when all was quiet."

"When you entered the room and opened the safe a new idea came to him."

"By assaulting you all the trouble of forcing the safe was avoided and so that game was adopted, and there's the whole affair in a nut-shell."

"I guess you have hit upon the truth," Dwindlehurst remarked in a tone of conviction.

And at this point the arrival of the detectives put an end to the conversation.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE DETECTIVE'S SUSPICIONS.

THE two gentlemen from the Central Office were good specimens of the average detectives as they are to be found in the large cities of the United States.

Men who possessed a certain amount of skill in the detective line, but who would never be apt to distinguish themselves by any great exploit.

Dwindlehurst related the particulars of the affair and then the gentlemen set to work.

As all the inmates of the house were fast in slumber's chain they had a clear field for their investigation.

The conclusion to which they came was exactly the same as Doc Grip's.

After making a careful examination they announced that they could not find the least trace to indicate that any possible entry had been made, and so it was apparent the robbery had either been committed by some one in the house, either one of the inmates, or some one admitted to the premises by an inmate.

Then they questioned Dwindlehurst as to whether any one was possessed of the knowledge that he had a large amount of valuable property in the safe.

Dwindlehurst answered that he had not spoken to a soul about the matter with the exception that about an hour before the robbery he had casually mentioned to his friend, Mr. Agrippa, something in regard to the matter.

The two detectives immediately exchanged glances full of meaning and then they favored Doc Grip with a close scrutiny.

Dwindlehurst, having previously been warned by the Westerner in regard to the conclusion to which the detectives were likely to come, understood immediately what was passing in their minds.

His statement had directed suspicions upon his friend, and the young millionaire was amused to see how truly Doc Grip had foreseen what the result of this communication would be.

"Excuse us, gentlemen, for a few minutes, please, while we consult in regard to this matter," said the detective, who appeared to be the master spirit of the two.

Thent he sleuth-hounds held a brief consultation, and when their deliberations were ended, they announced that it was not possible to do much of anything until morning.

"I will remain here in the house while my partner goes to the office to attend to some little business," the chief detective remarked.

"In the morning we will examine the servants, and I havn't the least doubt that we will find some old acquaintance among them; some cracksman, who has smuggled himself into the house on purpose to do this job."

"Yes, such tricks are worked quite frequently," asserted the other.

"I have known of high-toby men getting into a house of this kind in disguise, and laying low for six months, waiting for a favorable opportunity to do the job they had in view."

"By the way, I think I have had the pleasure of meeting you before," remarked the chief detective, abruptly, to Doc Grip, but speaking in the most cordial manner.

"But it was not in New York"—and the man hesitated, as though he was trying to remember when and where he had encountered the other.

"Probably in St. Louis, which has been my headquarters for the last three or four years," responded Doc Grip, politely, and acting as if he believed the other really thought he had encountered him somewhere.

"The chief of police at St. Louis and myself are great friends, and when I am in the city, I spend a great part of my time in his office, and it is probable that there is where we met."

There was a slight expression of astonishment visible on the faces of the two officers, and it was evident they were puzzled.

When the chief detective began his "fishing excursion," as a lawyer would say, in order to find out something about the man whom they suspected of having had a hand in the robbery, he hadn't any idea that the other would bring forward the superintendent of police of one of the largest of the Western cities as an intimate acquaintance.

For a moment the two were staggered, but they quickly recovered though, for a plausible explanation immediately occurred to them.

The stranger was the man who had done the "trick," and his talk about the chief of police of St. Louis was only a blind to divert suspicion from himself.

"Yes, it was probably in St. Louis that I met you," the chief detective observed in his politest manner.

"How may I call your name?"

"Agrippa—Jonathan Agrippa."

The odd appellation seemed convincing proof to both of these sleuth-hounds that the bearer of it was sailing under false colors for neither of them believed that it was his real name.

The head detective accompanied his companions to the door and a brief conversation took place between the two at the portal.

"That's the man, hey, Bob?" queried the chief.

"Not a doubt of it!"

"And the boodle is right here in the house now!"

"You bet it is!"

"And we will get into it in the morning."

"Well, I should smile!"

"Chief of police at St. Louis! Cute dodge, eh?"

"You bet high it is."

"Wire St. Louis the moment you reach the office and inquire of the superintendent there in regard to this Mister Jonathan Agrippa."

"It's a hundred to one that the answer will come back, 'Don't know the man!'" the other detective asserted, confidently.

"He's playing a bold game, but we'll get him dead to rights in the morning!"

And then the two parted.

During this time Doc Grip and Dwindlehurst had improved the opportunity to exchange a few words.

"What did I tell you?" Doc Grip asked, meaningly.

"Old fellow, you are a prophet and no mistake!" the young millionaire exclaimed.

"They have got their eyes on you and there isn't the least doubt about it."

"Oh, yes, I am suspected; just as I told you I would be if you mentioned the fact that you had revealed to me that the bonds were in the safe."

"What do you suppose they are up to now?" asked Dwindlehurst referring to the earnest conversation that the two detectives were engaged in at the door.

"They are probably busy in dissecting the character of a gentleman about my size, and the first move that the detective who is going to the office will make after he gets there will be to telegraph to the chief of police at St. Louis in regard to myself."

"When he gets the reply he will understand that you are all right though."

"Yes, when he gets it, but it will be some time before he does, for the chief wrote me that he was going away on a shooting excursion this week, and unless some unforeseen occurrence has detained him in town, no personal telegram will reach him until next Monday, and as I have always transacted my business with the chief in person, being careful to keep as much in the background as possible, no one in the office has any knowledge of me."

"By Jove! I see!" exclaimed Dwindlehurst, abruptly. "You have played a sort of a joke on these gentlemen. You mentioned the chief of police at St. Louis, because you knew that they couldn't reach him."

Doc Grip smilingly admitted that he had knowingly put the bloodhounds on a false scent.

The return of the detective at this point put a stop to the conversation.

"Now, gentlemen, you can go to bed as soon as you like," the detective said, "as nothing more can be done in the case until morning."

"I am not at all sleepy," Dwindlehurst remarked.

"Neither am I," observed Doc Grip.

"Come to my room then and we'll have a smoke, and if you feel inclined to take a nap, there's a couple of sofas for you to choose between."

"Make yourselves as comfortable as you can, gentlemen," the detective remarked.

"I will remain here on the watch, so as to prevent any one from leaving the house without an examination."

The two gentlemen proceeded to the private room of the millionaire, while the man-catcher remained in the entry.

It was a long and weary wait for all of them, but morning came at last.

And with the light came the detective who had gone to the Central Office.

As Doc Grip had predicted he had not been able to open communications with the chief of police at St. Louis, but the officer who represented the chief in his absence replied that he knew nothing whatever about a man answering to the name of Jonathan Agrippa.

This was just what the detectives expected and though the communication was not from the chief, yet as it agreed with their ideas they regarded it as being just the same.

With the second detective came two more so that the house could be completely guarded front and rear.

And after the servants were up the butler introduced them into the dining-room, where the head detective sat in state, and were by him subjected to a searching cross-examination.

By his direction nothing was said in regard to the robbery and the servants were at a loss to understand the meaning of the mysterious proceedings.

Nothing came of the examinations though and the detective informed Dwindlehurst that it was his opinion that none of the servants knew aught of the matter.

Then the detective said that the next thing on the programme was to thoroughly

search the house as it was his belief that the bonds had not been carried out of the mansion.

Dwindlehurst easily comprehended the reason for this move.

The detective was proceeding on the theory that Doc Grip was the criminal and had concealed the bonds somewhere in the house never thinking that the detective would be shrewd enough to look in the mansion itself for the plunder.

The butler was summoned to produce the keys and under his guidance the detective accompanied by the young millionaire and Doc Grip made a most careful search of the house from the garret to the cellar.

And the result was disappointing in the extreme.

Nothing at all was discovered.

Not the slightest clew to either the bonds or the thief.

The detective was disgusted.

"I don't exactly know what to make of it," he admitted privately to Dwindlehurst after the search was finished.

"I felt pretty sure we would strike upon some clew, for I didn't believe the fellow who had got the boodle had time to get out of the house with the plunder; but as we have searched high and low without being able to find the stuff, it really looks as if the fellow who did the trick has been smart enough to get the plunder out of the house."

As will be perceived by this speech, the detective still clung to his theory that Doc Grip was the man who did the stealing, although he had not been able to discover a single fact to warrant the belief.

"I set a couple of good men to work the street, so as to find out if there was anything out of the way noticed last night," the detective remarked.

And hardly was the remark uttered when the sleuth-hounds came in with their report.

The chief detective had spoken truly when he had said that they were good men; and they had succeeded in discovering some facts which seemed to have a bearing on the mystery.

About one o'clock a short, stoutly-built man, well along in years, with a dark beard and rather long hair—one account said iron-gray hair and beard—had been seen to walk slowly up the avenue, and about an hour later—or half an hour, the accounts differed—the same man came down the avenue with a small, black traveling-bag in his hand.

As the man seemed to be thoroughly respectable, nothing about him to excite suspicion, no notice was taken of him at the time.

But now that the urgent inquiry was set on foot, the fact of the man's being in the neighborhood of the avenue at about the time that the robbery was committed immediately suggested that he had something to do with it.

The chief detective felt positive in regard to this point.

"There isn't the least doubt in my mind about it!" he asserted.

"There is where the boodle went, and we must get on his track as soon as possible."

And to this end every nerve was strained.

A week passed quickly.

The news of the robbery had been made public, and a princely reward offered for any information leading to the apprehension of the robber or to the recovery of the bonds.

The affair created a great stir in the city of course and for a time nothing else was talked of.

But neither the efforts of the detectives nor the inducement of the large reward produced any results.

Clinging still to his first idea the chief detective caused a watch to be put on Doc Grip and for nearly a week no matter where our hero went his footsteps were dogged.

But at last the St. Louis chief of police returned to his home and immediately he sent a telegram to New York indorsing Doc Grip in the highest manner.

Realizing at last that they had blundered the detectives called off their trackers and Doc Grip was free to go in peace.

"Now, then," he said to Dwindlehurst,

when a new week began, "as the detectives have failed to gain a clew to the robber who got away with your bonds, I propose to try my hand."

"From the description given of this mysterious man who was seen on the avenue on the night of the robbery I think I can get a clew to him."

"If you recall the circumstance the description of this man is something like the one given of the driver of the coupe used by the Creole when he so neatly tricked Percy Livingstone."

"If, as I suspect, both of these blows were dealt by the same hand, then most surely it is the one single enemy who is pursuing you, and I think I can track the party down."

"God speed you!" cried Dwindlehurst.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A REVELATION.

TEN days passed away and during this time the young millionaire neither saw Doc Grip nor heard from him.

By this time too the story of his robbery had become an old tale and in the ceaseless whirl of city life other topics had supplanted it.

The police had not succeeded in gaining the slightest clew in the matter and had about come to the conclusion that unless they were especially favored by the chapter of accidents they never would.

The life of Dwindlehurst went on much the same as ever, although he was beginning to greatly miss Doc Grip.

"Hang it!" he would exclaim a dozen times a day, "that man is worth all the rest of my friends put together."

Impatiently he waited as day after day passed and the westerner did not make his appearance.

"By Jove! I wonder if anything can have happened to him?" he exclaimed at last, beginning to be seriously worried.

And that night when he retired to rest he dreamed that he was engaged in a desperate fight to save Doc Grip from some terrible danger which threatened him.

The nature of the peril was not made manifest, nor could he clearly make out who the foes were with whom he was contending, but the dream was one of those horrible affairs, nightmare-like, which sometimes haunt the slumbers of worried men.

Then, all of a sudden, he seemed to be suffocating.

He felt he could hardly breathe.

Conscious was he that he was on the point of waking up, but some subtle, foreign influence was exerting a terrible power upon him; he struggled against it with all his might, but sunk at last into insensibility.

When he recovered his senses, which came to him but slowly, he found himself lying upon the outside of a bed, half-dressed, in a low, squalid-looking apartment, dimly lighted by a single candle.

A woman had hold of his right hand, and as his reeling senses came slowly back to him, he could distinguish that a man in the room was speaking in a sing-song tone, and the last words of the sentence he was able to understand:

"I pronounce you man and wife."

This acted as a sort of galvanic shock to Dwindlehurst, and he endeavored to rise, but, to his astonishment found he was so secured to the bed that he could not move.

Perceiving that he had recovered his senses, the man who had been speaking, an elderly person, plainly dressed in a dark suit, and with a decided ministerial look about him, hastened from the room, evidently so that the young millionaire should not be able to speak to him.

Glancing around the room, Dwindlehurst saw that besides the woman there was a short, thick-set man, well in years, with iron-gray hair, and a beard of the same hue.

Immediately the suspicion flashed upon him that this was the man of whom Doc Grip had gone in search.

Had he found him?—had bold and resolute Doc Grip also fallen into his power?—for that this man was a foe Dwindlehurst firmly believed.

And then he turned his attention to the woman and to his surprise saw that she was the new housemaid, the supposed French.

girl who had entered his service only a short time ago.

And as he gazed, astounded at the discovery, at her face, he fancied that he recognized something familiar about it.

That is, he had seen the girl under other auspices.

Perceiving that he was now in full possession of his senses, the girl relinquished his hand and seated herself in a chair by the bedside.

"Well, Rudolph, dearest husband, how do you find yourself?" she asked in a tone full of mockery.

"Husband!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, that is the relation that you now bear to me."

"It is absurd! I am not married to you!"

"Oh, yes, you are, that gentleman who has just departed is the minister who performed the ceremony, and he came at your request too."

"At my request."

"So, he will testify in a court of law if he is called upon so to do."

"And he will tell a pretty story too; one which will be apt to make the fashionable world in which you move open its eyes."

"He will swear that you sought him out believing him to be a music-teacher, gaining but a scanty living, and offered him a goodly sum of money if he would perform the marriage ceremony between yourself and a foolish young French girl who loved you not wisely but too well."

"The ceremony was to quiet the girl and make her believe she was the lawful wife of the man she loved."

"Being a minister in reality he consented so that you would be caught in your own snare."

"But see here, what the deuce do you mean by all this?" Dwindlehurst exclaimed impatiently.

"I know that there is some trick about it of course, but what game are you up to?"

"I want a good bit of money of course; at the least half of all you are worth," responded the woman, coolly.

"Upon my word you are a little extravagant in your demands."

"Will nothing less than half my wealth satisfy you?"

"Nothing less!" she cried, firmly.

"And were it not that I dread the law I would strike at your life and then as your widow take all, for I would easily fix a will so that all could come to me!"

A demoniac light flashed from her eyes as she spoke and her face became convulsed with passion.

And with the face thus transformed, a sudden light broke in upon Dwindlehurst's mind.

"By Heaven! it is you who masqueraded as Clingman the Creole!" he said.

"You are quite right, and since the mask is off, you might as well know the truth."

"I am Helen Dwindlehurst, the child of your father, Herman Dwindlehurst, and his wife, Mary Culpepper."

"By rights every penny that you have in the world belongs to me."

"You ignored the claim and so a vendetta was declared against you, and at last I have succeeded in getting you completely in my power, and the web is woven around you so tightly that you cannot escape."

"My first blow dealt you on the Monmouth track was not successful, thanks to the interference of this Doc Grip, who came like a guardian angel to your aid."

"The next, though, was a success and you had your labor for your pains when you chased the Brazilian steamer."

"And the following stroke, too, when your bonds so mysteriously disappeared, was equally successful and now the final blow has been delivered."

"You are helpless in my power, and now the brother and sister, although the world will never know that we are such, will talk over family matters and settle how the vast wealth left by Herman Dwindlehurst shall be fairly divided between his heirs."

"In that case then you must allow me to say a word in the matter!" cried a stern voice and Doc Grip made his appearance through the doorway, which they had neglected to bar after the abrupt departure of the minister.

A cry of rage came from the lips of the

woman and the old man whom the reader undoubtedly has recognized as the hunchback, Banty Bull.

But as Doc Grip menaced them with a cocked revolver neither one of them dared to do more than to cry out.

"Yes, in the estate of Herman Dwindlehurst I claim an interest, inasmuch as he was my father and I his eldest son."

"It is the same old story."

"Herman Dwindlehurst was a villain! I say it though he was my father because it is the truth."

"He married my mother in the West and then deserted her."

"I did not learn the particulars until a few months ago when my mother on her deathbed confided to me her sad story."

"For years she had borne her cross and suffered in silence."

"She was too proud to pursue the villains who had deserted her, but I came East intent upon a reckoning."

"I found that the guilty man had paid the debt of nature, chance threw me in the way of his son, my half-brother, and I grew to like him, and now that he is taken at a disadvantage I come to his assistance."

At this point there was a simultaneous movement on the part of Banty Bull and the desperate woman.

Both produced pistols and fired at the intruder, who was standing between the two.

Perceiving the motion Doc Grip dodged nimbly back, and the result was that the confederates inflicted mutual wounds upon each other.

Down to the floor they sunk, weltering in their blood.

The vendetta was ended.

In an old house in a lonely location near Poit Morris this scene transpired.

The vengeful young woman had selected it for a headquarters, aided by Banty Bull, who had acted as her assistant in all her schemes.

Our tale is told, for with the death of the avenger ends our romance.

Judging that it was possible that the young woman who had played so strange a part, would be apt to hide her plunder in this old house, Doc Grip suggested an investigation, with the result of discovering an iron chest containing nearly all the valuables which had been taken from the young millionaire.

In his gratitude Dwindlehurst insisted on sharing his wealth with his new-found brother, and the latter, despite his objections, was at last compelled to accept.

And now it is rumored that two of the belles of Gotham will soon be wedded.

Gertrude Courtland will become Mrs. Rudolph Dwindlehurst, and charming Betina Campbell will marry our hero, Doc Grip.

THE END.

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